Industrial Worker

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Stockton truckers strike over delay time and broken promises

BY ADAM WELCH

IWW organizers and truckers held a successful gathering and mass meeting of over 120 Stockton drivers outside the city Nov. 20, discussing strategies to improve conditions for truckers working out of the Stockton rail yards and to build solidarity with short-haul truckers in other cities.

Several leaders of the predominantly Indian drivers spoke on the need for truckers to be united, noting that they were stronger together than fighting individually. A Filipino driver reported on the successfully settled Patriot strike, in which strikers won several demands including pay for wait times over an hour and bonuses for hazardous and overweight loads, and ultimately rid themselves of a hated manager. A Latino driver recalled the unity between the predominately Indian and Latino drivers during the May 2004 strikes that shut down port and rail trucking up and down the West Coast.

Two weeks later, on Dec. 9, twenty IWW truckers working out of the Stockton rail yards for Kach Trucking began a five-day strike after management did not respond to the drivers' demands for a previously promised 20 percent increase in rates for all deliveries and reduced "delay time," which is the unpaid wait times (of up to two hours – they are now paid an hourly rate for any wait time beyond two hours) they are forced to endure after delivering their cargo, along with several other pay issues.

Out of nearly 30 trucking companies moving cargo in and out of Stockton's rail yards, Kach is one of seven companies that have reneged on a previous agreement to keep wait times below one hour. Following a successful two-week strike by nearly all Stockton's more than 250 rail yard truckers in April 2004, all local companies agreed to the one-hour wait time. In a May 4, 2004, agreement signed by Kach General Manager Chris Roscom, the company agreed to this and several other issues.

However, while wait times were cut in the aftermath of the strike, Kach never fully implemented its agreement and wait times have been gradually creeping back up.

Kach drivers met the morning of Sunday,

continued on page 10



Kach strikers hold an IWW banner in front of their idled trucks PHOTO: HARJIT GILL

Why I was sacked:

A former zone worker tells her story



ART: RINI TEMPLETON

Extracted from "Behind the brand names: Working conditions and labour rights in export processing zones."

She used to work on a production line, making jeans and bras. Now Louissane Borgella makes school uniforms. The 32-year-old Haitian worker began working for herself after being dismissed in June, along with 370 co-workers from the CODEVI (Industrial Development Co.) free trade zone. With a brother, five sisters, and two children of her own to support, she does not have much choice.

Louissane has a vivid picture in her mind of the infernal production line where she worked in the free trade zone located on the Dominican-Haitian border. "The minimum wage was 432 gourdes (10.50 Euros) a week. We had to work on production lines of 14 people. If we managed to finish 10,000 items, we could earn 900 gourdes (22 Euros). *But I never managed. It was impossible. At best, 6,000 or 7,000, no more.*"

Louissane witnessed threats of physical violence and verbal abuse on a daily basis. "We were often pushed around while we were working. Some women were approached by men who wanted to 'have a chat' with them. They were threatened with dismissal if they didn't allow themselves to be taken advantage of."

Louissane could not even begin to calculate the number of overtime hours she worked, always unpaid. She had to clock in at the factory entrance by showing her ID card, but she never had to clock out. "Our working day was supposed to be from 6 in the morning to 4.30 in the afternoon, but the supervisor never agreed to that. He always wanted us to work longer, often until 6 pm and sometimes as late as 7.30. And do you think we received more money for it?"

Louissane decided to join the local union SOKOWA, which had been formed in March, knowing that she risked her job. When, in June, Grupo M, the Dominican company controlling CODEVI, fired workers from five out of the ten production lines, claiming a fall in productivity, Louissane did not believe it for one second. "We were sacked because we had organized a one-day strike for a pay rise. The workers on these five production lines were practically all members of SOKOWA."

The 5,500 gourdes received as "severance pay" have not silenced Louissane.

But aside from sexual harassment, mass dismissals and other violations of workers' rights, Louissane Borgella's chief concern is her health. On two occasions, CODEVI workers were administered vaccines in the factory clinics. These were tetanus jabs, they were told. Since then, many of the women have been suffering from serious health problems. "I myself no longer have my periods at the same time; they come much later. And I often have stomach ache." Like many workers, Louissane suspects that she may have been subjected to a covert sterilization campaign, but has no way of proving it.

Would this former FTZ worker ever work again in the CODEVI free trade zone? "If the management starts to show respect for the workers, yes. If not, no!"

Download the full report at: http://www.icftu.org/www/PDF/EPZreportE.pdf

Workers suspicious of Euro union leaders

BY PETER MOORE

Workers at the European Social Forum in London, England struggled to find answers to the privatization, impending European Constitution, and the war in Iraq. About 200 workers and activists attended the October 15 meeting titled "The Left in the Union Movement in Europe."

Speakers and audience members proposed strategies that ranged from founding workers' parties to rank-and-file media to opposing the war in Iraq.

German speaker Markus Dahms, of the Berlin Trade Union Left, took the audience back to the future, by announcing they had founded a new left wing party with 5,000 adherents to supplant the German social democratic parties. "Consciousness is growing slowly," he said. His speech was greeted with skepticism, if not the chilliness received by Socialist Party of England partisans who called for a "mass workers party."

"In Britain, we campaign against the Labour government," said Jane Loftus of the United Kingdom postal workers union, which is facing a government privatization move to open the British post to competition in January 2006. She is part of a rank-and-file newspaper, *Post Worker,* that prints 12,000 copies per issue with an estimated readership of four people per copy.

What the union couldn't do legally, we could do to strengthen the struggle. And when the union doesn't represent their workers, we can hold them responsible, said Loftus, noting her union has a militant rank-and-file that organizes illegal strikes. The newspaper creates a way to organize outside of the union structure. "A social network can deliver action on the ground."

Tasos Anastasiadis, also publishes a newspaper, *Financial Crimes,* in Greece with a small group of anarchist-oriented journalists. "When the unions don't want to do anything, we organize with the rank-and-file to push them."

Both Italian and German workers said that past European Social Forums have not lived up to expectations as a way to build solidarity and cooperation. A German metal worker from the floor, told how a European day of action promised by labour activists at the previous Forum had only resulted in action by German workers on April 13, 2004. "We don't just want to share experiences. We want to fight back," he said.

Annick Coupe of G10 Solidaires France,

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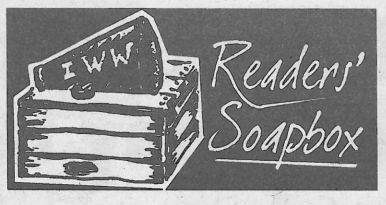
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Workers generate all wealth

Fellow Workers,

It was with great surprise that I read "A union of the wealthy" by Shaun Randol (December 2004), an article condemning overpaid professional hockey players.



This type of story has been a staple in the boss press for many years. On a regular basis we are told the size of the paychecks that individual athletes draw, the implication being that our lives would be improved somehow if they were paid less. I have always considered these stories, as well as the nearly identical ones concerning transit workers, state employees and any workers who attempt to advance their interests through organization, to be the depth of knavery to which the kept press sinks.

Randol tells us that professional hockey players, currently locked out by their bosses, are grossly overpaid, habitually live in mansions, and are so greedy that they are only willing to take a 5 percent pay cut. The players, through their union, are "miffed that the owners are... pushing for a (*gasp*) salary cap." Randol goes on in this vein at length and concludes by advising us to feel no solidarity with the greedy hockey players.

In actuality, it is the players who generate all the wealth with which the National Hockey League is awash. In this they occupy an identical position with the rest of us workers. Were we ever to gain "the full product of our labor" in a literal sense, the professional athletes would get large raises. It is the players skating up and down the ice who bring in the ticket sales, the beer and hot dog income, the television revenues, the endorsements, the "naming rights." The hockey bosses, invisible in the article, sit on their asses and sop up many times the amount the players get. Moreover, almost all of these athletes are people from modest working-class backgrounds.

In former times, before professional athletes organized, they were treated as helots. Although their activity generated millions, the stars did not get huge pay and the average players got just a little more than they would have been paid on regular jobs. The arrogant "sportsmen," as the bosses styled themselves, comported themselves like emperors and kept the athletes in a state of dependence through a combination of "reserve clause" crap and collusion with their peers.

Every once in a while some group of workers, by possession of a valuable skill and effective organization, is able to draw an income above average, sometimes way above average. If they weren't to do this, the bosses would keep it all. We should not kid ourselves – if the players were reduced to beggary the price of a ticket would not go down a nickel. The type of organization the pro athletes have does not generate a larger solidarity nor consciousness of what should be the goal of unionization, but I'll be damned if an industrial unionist should condemn any group of workers who are taking a bigger bite out of the boss than the rest of us are able to. This kind of stuff is a lot more appropriate in the boss press. It ought to stay there.

Steve Kellerman, X325068

Fighting grocery concessions

I know that the UFCW is a favorite whipping boy of the IWW, but I must protest an article in the latest *IW* entitled "UFCW Blocks Colorado Strike." UFCW grocery workers in Colorado are being asked by the huge corporate chains they work for to accept a seriously shitty contract full of concessions. Concessions in one part of the country affect those of us in other parts of the country working for the same employers, so this agreement hurts not only the workers voting on this particular contract.

The president of my workplace union, the UFCW, stopped the voting on this proposal not to "block a strike" but because it was apparent that many workers were going to accept this proposal and it had a chance of passing. The UFCW, perhaps more than any other U.S. union, has to start strategically dealing with the mega-corporations which dominate our industry. I *applaud* president Hansen's attempt to block a damaging contract being ratified. This is an example of when I favor "top-down" strategy over "democracy."

Which brings me to another article in the paper which I disagreed with, the front page "AFL Piecards" article. I do not see what is going on in the AFL-CIO debate around restructuring as being "flailing." I see it as a very good debate over strategy and the future of the "mainstream" labor movement. I mean, look at the debate going on in the IWW around the issues of strategy, accountability, planning, organizing departments, etc. Is this "flailing" because there are very different views being put forth? I heartily welcome the debate going on in the AFL-CIO.

I am generally a supporter of the "Unite To Win" proposals and have done a lot of work locally with the unions presenting these ideas. I don't see them as being anywhere near as draconian as the *IW* would lead us to believe.

In Solidarity, Donna Wilson

Editor's Note: *We have been covering the UFCW grocery contract fights precisely because they represent a danger to all workers, and have frequently pointed to the need for the union to act against the union scabbing that has characterized its strategy from day one. When the UFCW international intervened, workers had rejected concessions in all units where the votes had been counted. I would agree that workers ought not to accept concessions of this sort, though I could understand why some workers might prefer to take the concessions now rather than strike for a few months and then take similar concessions, as happened to their fellow workers in Southern California.*

Corrections & clarifications

In the November issue, two pictures appeared on page 5 as part of our Million Workers March coverage that should have been credited to the photographers. The top picture was by Eric A. Burnham, and the bottom by Gregory Ehrendreich of the Chicago GMB. Our apologies for the oversight.

In our December issue, several Zs and 0s on page 5 were somehow lost in transferring the file from our equipment to the printer.

Several articles were affected. Some 4,100 hotel workers are involved in the San Francisco dispute, and would have to pay as much as $109 a month more to preserve their health benefits under management's final offer. Atlantic City casino workers will receive pay hikes of 25 - 30 cents an hour in the fourth and fifth years of their new contract (except that those with less than eight years on the job will get nothing). 17,500 Colorado UFCW members were voting on deep concessions. The pizza workers' union claims some 600 members; for information: www.pizzadeliverydrivers.org.

The Plumbers union spent $800 million on the Diplomat Hotel, and more than $30 million on a nearby country club assessed at $10 million. Its pension plan lost $3 million invested in Value America when it went bankrupt in 2000. Union president Martin Maddaloni resigned after we went to press.

And East Coast longshoremen now need to log 1,000 hours to qualify for even 50 percent health coverage, 300 more than before.

We regret these difficulties. We recently switched to a new production computer and desktop publishing program, and it appears the interface with our printer's equipment needs some attention.

Call for a Jan. 8 Day of Action against Starbucks

Following on from the successful Wobbly/Zapatista protests on Nov. 20, Edinburgh (Scotland) IWW is calling for a Day of Action against Starbucks on Saturday, Jan. 8. The call will be echoed by Edinburgh-Chiapas Solidarity who will send it out through the Zapatista/anticapitalist network. IWW organizer Dan Gross goes to court January 14 and faces a possible sentence of more than six months for peacefully protesting outside Starbucks in Manhattan, NYC. It is hoped that as many diverse groups as possible will respond to this call and where possible joint protests will be organised. For details contact: edinburghiww@ yahoo.co.uk

In Solidarity, Edinburgh General Membership Branch

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2005 IWW election results

Alexis Buss was re-elected as IWW General Secretary-Treasurer. The 2005 General Executive Board will be composed of Jim Crutchfield (New York City), Mark Damron (Cincinnati), Joshua Freeze (Austin), Heather Hall (Winnipeg), Samara Paysee (Santa Barbara), Adam Welch (San Jose), and Evan Wolfson (Pittsburgh). John Persak (Seattle) will serve as first alternate.

Both proposed constitutional amendments (clarifying the right of the GEB to remove officers who do not fulfill their responsibilities, and establishing a new conflict mediation procedure) carried by substantial majorities. The 2005 IWW General Assembly will be held in Philadelphia over the Labor Day weekend.

Braden Cannon, Greg Giorgio and Meir Israelowitz were elected to the International Solidarity Commission. Jon Bekken was elected to another two-year term as editor of the *Industrial Worker*.

The Australian IWW Regional Organising Committee elected Ray Elbourne Secretary-Treasurer, Meela Davis as Communications Secretary, Adam Lincoln as International Secretary, and Sam Russell *Direct Action* editor. Amendments to reinstate a monthly dues scale pegged to income and to adopt a new ROC logo and bylaws were also approved.

Java Hut workers defeat

The Western Massachusetts IWW lost a NLRB representation election Dec. 3 at an independent coffee shop and bakery called Java Hut, but hopes to build a stronger job branch in the shop and to reach out to other workers in the industry. Two workers were fired during the campaign, and management's campaign of intimidation was so fierce that at least two workers who had become dues-paying IWW members ultimately voted against union representation.

IWW organizer to stand trial

Daniel Gross, co-founder of the IWW Starbucks Workers Union, is set to stand trial Jan. 14 on charges of disorderly conduct and resisting arrest at a Republican National Convention protest. Gross participated in a peaceful union rally in front of the Starbucks store where he works to protest the Bush Administration's support for union-busting at the world's largest coffee chain. He faces a maximum sentence of six months in jail.

FW Gross said videotape and eyewitness evidence will demonstrate that NYPD officers concocted these charges. The only people arrested at the protest were both union workers at the store. Prosecutors later dropped charges against Starbucks barista Anthony Polanco.

"Daniel Gross is being prosecuted for political reasons," said noted attorney Leonard Weinglass, who is representing FW Gross. "The DA and the NYPD are desecrating the right to assembly guaranteed by the First Amendment."

New York organizers have been contacted by Starbucks workers across the country. "Workers are coming together to rise out of poverty, put an end to understaffing, and achieve a guaranteed number of work hours per week," Gross said.

Bike messenger newsletter

The Windy City Bike Messenger Association has published the first issue of *The Standby*, a newsletter for the Chicago courier community. Copies are available from the Chicago GMB. The debut issue includes articles on organizing in Chicago, the messenger community in general and a few creative pieces.

January 20 actions

Anti-authoritarians are organizing a contingent for protests in Washington DC against the Bush inauguration. For information, email: j20blackbloc@hushmail.com

Stripping the mask off Starbucks

Britain: IWW and Zapatistas support Chiapas farmers and Manhattan baristas

In Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Bristol, protestors from the IWW, Zapatista support groups and an anticapitalist coalition picketed Starbucks outlets Nov. 20, handing out fliers and free Zapatista coffee to publicise the two-faced sham of "the McDonalds of coffee."

Old Edinburgh evolved along the narrow steep-sided ridge behind the Castle Rock that would become world-famous as the Royal Mile. "It grew, under the law that regulates the growth of walled cities in precarious situations, not in extent but in height and density," wrote Robert Louis Stevenson of his hometown, where "houses sprang up storey after storey… until the population slept fourteen or fifteen deep in a vertical direction." Fifteen-storey tenements!

Edinburgh invented the skyscraper – then sold the idea to Manhattan. Which is a neat link to why a cold November Saturday found an alliance of local Wobblies and Zapatistas mustering in the Royal Mile, midway between the brute mass of battlement-crowned Castle Rock and twinkling Holyrood Palace.

Edinburgh IWW had followed the struggle of the IWW's Starbucks Workers Union in New York City, from its 'first in the nation' announcement of a café workers' or 'baristas' branch and its subsequent fight for recognition and better pay and conditions from the $15 billion Starbucks corporation, the biggest coffee distributor on the planet.

We watched with mounting anger as the low-paid and hard-pressed baristas found themselves fighting management threats, blackmail and bribery, union-busting lawyers and a corrupt labour relations board filled with Bush yes-men. Our anger turned to loathing when two IWW Barista organisers were fingered by Starbucks managers and brutally arrested for peacefully protesting this corruption.

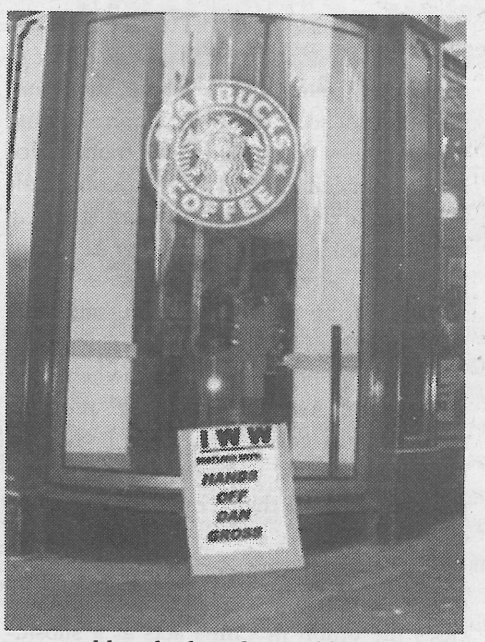
One, Dan Gross, faces a prison sentence of at least six months on phony charges of disorderly conduct and resisting arrest at a pro-Bush convention. Edinburgh IWW decided to offer support. The question was, how?

We couldn't urge a boycott unless the Big Apple Baristas called for one. And with no Starbucks insiders here it was felt a futile waste of time and meagre resources to parachute in and try to unionise its Edinburgh outlets, especially as most local baristas are university students working short part-time contracts. The branch decided to publicise the New York struggle by leafleting a Starbucks shop on November 20. Which one? The one in the Royal Mile of course, always teeming with shoppers and tourists. The Baristas Union was informed, and replied enthusiastically. Then the project grew.

One mind, one face

In July the Starbucks Workers Union and the human rights group Global Exchange united to call on Starbucks to fulfil its commitment to coffee farmers. "This move creates an unprecedented coalition of Starbucks workers in this country and coffee farmers abroad," said the Baristas' press release, quoting Dan Gross: "We see our struggles for humane wages and working conditions as united. No longer will Starbucks be allowed to run roughshod over its Baristas or coffee farmers." Edinburgh has a support group for the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico where the indigenous insurgents have established autonomous communities with their own health and education services. One IWW member who has twice gone to Chiapas to work in the autonomous communities reported that the local support group would like to do a joint protest. The branch readily agreed.

And so it was that the Starbucks outlet in Edinburgh's Royal Mile suddenly found one of its windows blocked by a blood-red Wobbly banner, while an information table



appeared beside the other and began to dispense info and free cups of Zapatista coffee – a brilliant tactic we all thought. But the manager disagreed. He claimed the broad walkway in front of his shop was Starbucks property and we were trespassing. With howls of derisive laughter ringing in his ears he spat "I'm calling the police," and vanished into his aromatic fiefdom. He was followed inside and the workers given fliers and told our fight was not with them – quite the opposite. Outside in the cold but thronging Royal Mile we waited for the police, determined not to budge.

There were 15 on the picket, about half from each group, and the protest's make-up reflected its international outlook. Along with the Scots were at least one each from Ireland, England, Italy, Spain, South Africa and the USA, some of them Wobs, some Zaps. Seven nationalities together showing solidarity with fellow workers in the U.S. and Mexico. We had brought 1,000 fliers, printed free as an act of solidarity by Glasgow's Clydeside Press (who did 500 more when the newly reformed Clydeside IWW and the just-formed Glasgow Zapatista support group announced that they

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Preamble to the IWW Constitution

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

Join the IWW Today

The IWW is a union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities both to win better conditions today and to build a world without bosses, a world in which production and distribution are organized by workers ourselves to meet the needs of the entire population, not merely a handful of exploiters.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organize industrially – that is to say, we organize all workers on the job into one union, rather than dividing workers by trade, so that we can pool our strength to fight the bosses together.

Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have recognized the need to build a truly international union movement in order to confront the global power of the bosses and in order to strengthen workers' ability to stand in solidarity with our fellow workers no matter what part of the globe they happen to live on.

We are a union open to all workers, whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organize the worker, not the job, recognizing that unionism is not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address our common concerns. Sometimes this means striking or signing a contract. Sometimes it means refusing to work with an unsafe machine or following the bosses' orders so literally that nothing gets done. Sometimes it means agitating around particular issues or grievances in a specific workplace, or across an industry.

Because the IWW is a democratic, member-run union, decisions about what issues to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved.

TO JOIN: Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month's dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 13476, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

Initiation is the same as one month's dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under $1,000, dues are $6 a month. If your monthly income is between $1,000 - $2,000, dues are $12 a month. If your monthly income is over $2,000 a month, dues are $18 a month.

- ❑ I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer
- ❑ I agree to abide by the IWW constitution
- ❑ I will study its principles and make myself acquainted with its purposes.



Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Membership includes a subscription to the Industrial Worker.

Wal-Mart loves Chinese (company) unionism

BY HARRY SIITONEN

One of our great global retail exploiters, Wal-Mart, fights attempts to unionize here in the United States and elsewhere, tooth and nail. But not so in China any more. Bowing to pressure by the government's mouthpiece All-China Federation of Trade Unions to allow them to unionize in Wal-Mart's growing Chinese mainland operations, the American piranha corporation apparently says "cool," according to an article from Shanghai in *The New York Times* of November 25.

And why not? In a country where "the dictatorship *over* the proletariat" prevails, these Chinese government labor bodies are the state capitalist equivalent of the "company unions" of their corporate capitalist counterparts.

"Setting up a union won't make much difference in workers' wages because in most cases the union in China acts as a subsidiary to the employer and rarely represents the workers and fights for higher wages," Fei Li, a retailing specialist at the School of Economics at Tsinghua University in Beijing told the *Times*.

"Rarely ... do unions in China oppose management or press for higher wages and better working conditions," the *Times* adds.

We've read numerous reports in the *Industrial Worker* and elsewhere about the attempts of Chinese workers to try to organize independent unions to fight the horrid conditions under which they are forced to work in the "New China." Activists are locked up for long periods and during the last few weeks we've seen reports of troops moving in to smash mass protests of workers over plant closures, loss of pensions, health care, and lack of job safety conditions, etc. Clubs to the head and jails are their reward.

But world capital is pouring in money to build plants for the cheap labor and other production costs, with the blessings of the Chinese Communist government, which provides them the iron heel of police and military protection to keep the pesky workers in line so they can freely exercise their profit plunder. Of course the party bureaucrats get to live high off the hog from this scam.

This very much reminds one of the lessons of George Orwell's classic political satire, *Animal Farm*. The animals revolt against the rich human farmer to end their exploitation and run their barnyard society in common for their own benefit. But then the porcine bolshies co-opt the revolution and seize power as a new elite, declaring that: "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others." The novel concludes with a scenario in which the new elite cadre is boozing and feasting it up with the old exploiting farmer who the animals had earlier routed. No one could tell them apart.

Is it any different in modern China? From Mao to Wal-Mart in a half-century! We can only hope that the spreading revolts of tens of thousands in both cities and countryside, where the peasants have become dispossessed and destitute, can eventually bust up this cozy symbiosis of world corporate and Chinese state capitalism.

Alice Lynd faces jail

An Ohio appeals court has stayed an order sending attorney and prisoner-rights activist Alice Lynd to jail until Dec. 23, pending its review of whether Lynd's refusal to testify is covered by attorney-client privilege.

A trial judge held Lynd in contempt of court and sentenced her to jail until she agrees to testify about an inmate's confession to her that he killed an inmate during the bloody Lucasville prison uprising in 1993. Lynd, 74, refused to testify about what an inmate she referred to only as "Mr. X" told her about the murder because it would violate attorney-client privilege.

Prosecutors argued that Lynd, who met with several prisoners in connection with a possible lawsuit over prison conditions, was not the inmate's attorney and that attorney-client privilege did not apply. The judge agreed, and ordered deputies to escort Lynd to jail. Lynd's supporters – including her husband and co-author of several books, Staughton Lynd – applauded to show support for Alice Lynd's stand as she was removed from the court room.

The Lynds began investigating the uprising at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility in Lucasville in 1996 as they helped prepare inmate George Skatzes' appeal. The Lynds came to believe that Skatzes, who was sentenced to death for the murder of two inmates (including the one in which authorities are now attempting to prosecute another inmate) during the riot, is innocent.

Staughton Lynd's book, *Lucasville: The Untold Story of a Prison Uprising*, was recently published by Temple University Press.

Workers of the World, Skype!

BY ERIC LEE



More than a century and a half ago, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels drafted a document on the subject of what we now call "globalization." They called their little pamphlet "The Communist Manifesto." In it, they pondered the rise of a new kind of society – capitalism – which was at that time spreading throughout the world. They were particularly interested in the emerging struggle between workers and bosses, and noted that while workers were sometimes winning these fights, their victories were always temporary.

"The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers," they wrote. "This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry, and that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another."

By "improved means of communication" they meant railroads. Now, let's fast-forward 157 years.

The real challenge facing unions today is not to win better contracts. It is not even to recruit more members. The main task facing all unions, everywhere, is exactly what Marx and Engels described at the dawn of the capitalist era: to create an "ever-expanding union" that unites workers "of different localities." If anyone was in doubt what they meant by this, consider this famous passage from the same document:

We are reproached, they said, "with desiring to abolish countries and nationality. The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got." And, of course, the unforgettable ending: "Workers of all countries, unite!"

Extraordinary words for 1847. But just as the founders of the modern socialist movement understood globalization more than a century before anyone was using the term, so they understood the role of communications in erasing national boundaries and creating a global alternative to capitalism.

If our main job today is to build a global movement that knows no borders, we need to embrace all the new means of communication that come our way. Particularly if they are less expensive or easier to use than what we are using today.

One thing we have learned in the union movement after a decade of Internet use is that people still like to talk. Unionists still use telephones. They still go to face-to-face meetings. And they show a real reluctance to adopt technologies like web forums, instant messaging, and Wikis, all of which require that they type.

One reason may well be that they do not feel comfortable typing. Or that they are more at ease speaking than writing.

Another issue to consider is that in international communications, people are often more comfortable speaking a language which they have learned (such as English) than writing it.

Because of this, international communications between unionists remain prohibitively expensive. The cost of a telephone call to or from most developing countries remains quite high, even if the costs of calls between developed countries has fallen.

But imagine if a technology would emerge that would allow unionists to communicate across borders, around the globe, using their voices. A telephone system that was completely free of charge. Wouldn't that remove one of the bigger obstacles to international communication? (An even bigger one is the problem of language, but we'll discuss that in a future article.)

The promise of using the Internet to make free telephone calls is not a new one. Back in the mid-1990s I remember testing out something called The Internet Phone. Made by an Israeli company called Vocaltec, it was totally unreliable, in part because connections to the net were so slow.

That was then – and Skype is now. Skype is a completely free bit of software which anyone can download to their computers. It works best if you have a broadband (ADSL or cable modem) connection to the net, but it will also work on a dial-up connection. Skype works if you have Windows, Mac OS, Linux or even a Pocket PC – the last of these meaning that you could use Skype like a mobile phone if you are within range of a wireless network.

Once you have Skype installed on your computer, assuming that you have a microphone and speakers (or better, an inexpensive headset), you can call anyone else who has it. And here's the amazing bit: the sound quality is really much better than that of a phone. You can have conference calls with up to four other people, for as long as you'd like, anywhere in the world, completely free of charge.

I was invited a few weeks ago to help teach a course attended by unionists from a number of Asian countries, meeting at the International Labour Organization center in Turin, Italy. One of the things I was asked to demonstrate was Skype. I rang up a colleague in Sydney, Australia, and he was able to be heard by the entire class. And I have to say again: this was completely free of charge.

Skype is the most popular – but not the only – software that does something techies call Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP). All that means is using the net like a phone. Unfortunately, if you choose to use a different system than Skype, such as Net2Phone, you can only speak to people who use that system. Which is a good reason to embrace the software that most people use. Skype is currently claiming more than 42 million downloads. Which means that a lot of working people and a lot of union members are probably already using the software.

Skype also allows you call out to ordinary phones, but you will be charged a small amount for this – and in my own experience, the sound quality is not great.

Don't get me wrong – I'm a great fan of email and the web. But when I watch unionists struggling with instant messaging and web forums and Wikis, and I see the ease with which they adopt Skype, it is clear to me that this will be an essential part of any unionists' tool kit in the twenty-first century.

What would Marx and Engels have said about all this? It's pretty clear to me: Workers of the world – Skype!

Study: Unemployment kills

A study of job-holding and jobless workers – all twins – published in the December issue of the *American Journal of Public Health* reports that unemployment dramatically increases your chances of early death. Women who lost their jobs were more than twice as likely to die from injuries and suicide, 30 percent more likely to die from heart disease, and 40 percent more likely to die early overall.

The death rate of jobless men from "undetermined external causes" was 5.8 times that of their employed twins. The overall early death rate for male twins who suffered joblessness at any time was 30 percent higher than for their job-holding twins.

"Unemployment is associated with an increased risk of early death even after adjustment for several potential confounding factors, including socioeconomic status, lifestyle factors, and genetic and early childhood factors," the researchers wrote.

AFL boycotts Vance goons

Vance International, a security firm that specializes in providing goons to harass unionists, has been added to the AFL-CIO boycott list after the company threatened to fire guards who spoke to SEIU organizers.

Vance provides security personnel for labor disputes around the world, even opening an office in Iraq, which helped suppress organizing efforts of Iraqi workers.

Workers at Detroit's daily papers remember Vance's thuggish tactics all too well. Vance guards became notorious for their brutality during the 1995-2000 newspaper strike. One worker, Vito Sciuto, was beaten into a coma by Vance guards, but later recovered.

The AFL-CIO boycott call does not say how many unions or union members have hired the company.

10 arrested on picket line

Police arrested 10 workers picketing an Ormet Corp. aluminum plant Nov. 26, charging them with violating a court order requiring pickets to stay at least 2,000 feet away from the struck plant's entrance.

The workers were attempting to block vans they believed were carrying scabs into the factory; the company says the vans were carrying food for scabs already in the plant, security guards and a salaried worker who is working during the strike.

Some 1,300 workers are on strike at two Ormet plants in Hannibal, Ohio. Ormet is seeking bankruptcy court approval to cancel its labor contracts and save $23 million by freezing pensions, raising worker health contributions, and changing work rules.

The injunction was granted after pickets turned back a truck trying to enter the plant, and the driver of another truck drove into the picket line, sending a striker to the hospital. Although that driver was released after a few hours, the arrested strikers were held for three days, and not allowed to contact family or attorneys for several hours.

At least 17 workers have been arrested since the strike began. Several were arrested after a truck driver they spoke with about the strike decided to honor the picket line.

Sutter locks out Frisco nurses

Around 7,000 nurses and hospital workers were locked out of 13 of Sutter's hospitals in the San Francisco Bay Area for five days, following a one-day strike.

Caregivers and other workers say Sutter is putting CEO pay before patient care. On Dec. 3, SEIU 250 filed suit against Sutter Health and the strike-breaking firm Modern Industrial Services, "America's leader in strike re-staffing," for alleged violations of criminal and civil codes. The California Nurses Association filed an unfair labor practice charge against Sutter's Alta Bates Summit medical center charging the lockout was illegal.

The unions have also charged Sutter with violating California law requiring that scabs be notified that a labor dispute is underway before they are hired.

Parry Center staff strike for rights

BY X355020, IU 650

Parry Center SEIU local 987 in Portland, Oregon, is on strike. I am a dual carder working at the Center, and active in the union. The Parry Center is a residential treatment facility for children with severe behavioral disorders, employing about 100 workers. Around 90% of its funds are public. It has a secure unit that is as intense as the state hospital, and is the only unit of its kind in the state.

The harsh nature of this work is such that enforced poverty (line staff make $8.86-$9.25/hour with a required college degree), understaffing, and a lack of concern by management create an environment where there are daily assaults, and the staff complains of being unable to do positive work. Instead they are forced to contain the blowouts. Things were so bad this year that a few staff had their bones broken.

Workers are demanding an end to targeting union activists and activities, staff-to-children ratio language, and a raise. The raise is aimed at reducing turnover to yield more stability and experienced staff for the children, who often grew up in unstable households. Turnover is quite high, with around 65% of line staff (people who work with the children) having worked there less than a year.

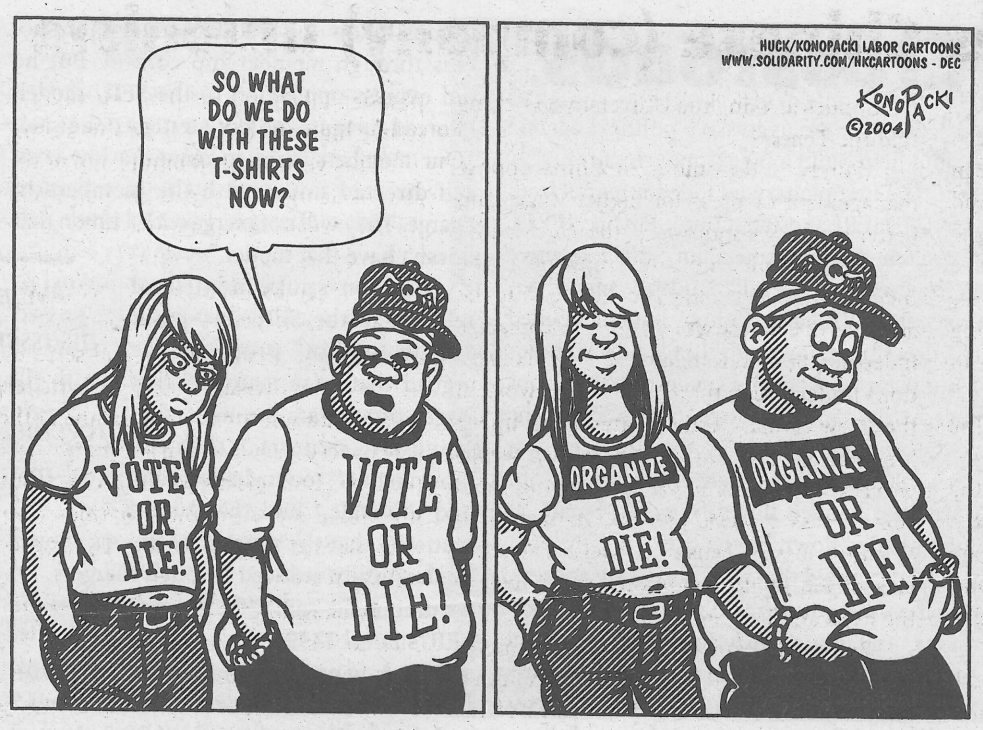
Support from the community and unions has been immense. Local unions have been walking the line and donating to our strike. A radical labor collective briefly occupied an administration building without arrest. Since the beginning of negotiations, fellow workers in Portland have been marching with us. Some have taken off work and really put themselves on the line for us. With the approval of the Portland IWW Industrial District Council, we organized a house visit to a union-busting board member. About 10 Wobs showed up, sang, chanted, and caroled.

Management, however, is threatening to permanently replace us, and may have begun to do so despite threats from politicians against using state funds to permanently replace workers. During the first few days of the strike management and scabs hit and nearly ran down picketers with their cars. Things have subsequently calmed down, but the tension is still there.

Many scabs have joined us after coming to work, some of those crossing are discussing ceasing to do so. Overall, there are very few scabs. Management is taking huge losses every week. So far actions have been minimal, but we are working to build the militancy needed to win this strike in a group of people who are new to union action. We appreciate all the Wobblies who have come down to support our strike.

Please call the Oregon governor (503-378-3111) and ask him to demand that Trillium settle the contract; otherwise he should pull their contracts until they do.

Please call Trillium CEO Kim Scott (503-205-3553) and ask him to agree to binding arbitration and end this abuse of public funds, workers and kids.



Red state, Red boss Blue state, Blue boss

Superficial regional differences highlight 2004 U.S. election

BY JOHN KALWAIC

Normally Wobblies do not take much interest in electoral politics, because most of us believe that labor organizing is the way to go. We also very much believe in a class conscious attitude. However, we cannot ignore the fact that politicians are using misguided class-based politics for reactionary ends.

In these times there seems to be very little difference between opposing candidates, especially in the United States, and the recent U.S. election was especially telling. There were even smaller differences between the two candidates, Bush and Kerry, this year than between Bush and Gore in 2000.

Both Bush and Kerry's economic programs were very similar; they even both supported a guest worker program in the United States. You might think they differed on social or international issues; however, they both favored continuing the U.S. occupation of Iraq. As a senator, Kerry voted for Bush's war. Both supported the death penalty and opposed gay marriage. Neither candidate was particularly charismatic or a good speaker, and neither came off that well in the debates. So why was mainstream capitalist America so bitterly divided?

The primary differences seemed to be in the delivery. Kerry's main difference from Bush was that he wanted the U.S. to look more respectable in the eyes of the world. He wanted to have a multilateral empire, rather than a unilateral one.

The difference seemed mostly to be about style and region. Politicians and media specialists seem to want to stereotype entire regions of the United States as being either low-class, culturally backward and naturally intolerant, or as elitist and smug-superior Hollywood types. Politicians play on these prejudices

Actually nothing could be a more ridiculous generalization. There are working class people in both red states and blue states. There are rich people and poor people in both urban and rural areas and of all different races and backgrounds. This is just the latest way to divide the working class by superficial regional differences. Historically, many red states have been more progressive then many blue states.

The worst part about these misconceptions is that they line up workers to support political and economic bosses who seem to "represent their values." Leftists are sometimes guilty of going along with these stereotypes. Bush is sometimes portrayed positively or negatively as "cowboy." For instance, a famous NASCAR racer claimed in an advertisement for Bush that "Bush has a farm in Texas while Kerry has a mansion in Nantucket." In reality Bush has a multi-million dollar ranch and is as far away from a true cowboy as Kerry is from being a Boston dock worker. Both candidates were extremely wealthy and backed policies that would favor the wealthy.

So I ask all the pundits and political commentators who are going on and on about differences between the blue states and the red states: what difference does it make whether your boss drinks the finest imported wine or the finest imported beer, whether they eat caviar or fine porterhouse steak, or whether they spend their vacation on a dude ranch or windsurfing? If a worker does not get a vacation, it is all the same to them.

Pittsburgh anti-sweatshop bill saved from stealth attack

Anti-sweatshop activists successfully turned back a sneak attempt by local business interests to repeal Pittsburgh's Anti-Sweatshop bill, which has been on the books since October 1997. The proposal was buried in a bill merging city and county purchasing operations. Activists confronted City Council with evidence that the law is not being enforced, including testimony from a recent local talk by Bengladeshi garment workers.



The IWW: 1905 - 2005

Here is a rare image showing the leadership of the Industrial Workers of the World from the union's first year (1905-06). Included in this group should be Charles O. Sherman, the first and only president of the IWW. Although united in their opposition to capitalism, the membership of the IWW in its formative years was far from united in ideology or tactics. Several factions, active from the union's beginning, clashed at the 1906 convention. Not only did the convention vote Sherman out of office, but also the position of president was abolished for good measure. The union's leadership then steered the IWW away from the safe waters of traditional "pure and simple unionism" towards the "One Big Union" as the only haven for workers from the excesses of America's industrial empire.

Tom Featherstone, Photo Archivist, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University

Air America: 'Progressive' Clear Channel capitalism

BY GENE DARJEELING

Until the local AM radio station affiliate aired a commercial for marketing positions with Clear Channel Corporation, I wasn't aware that Clear Channel affiliates carried so-called "Progressive Talk" radio shows from the Air America radio network. Not that one should expect less from Democratic pundits such as Bobby Kennedy Jr., who romanticized taking back the election, and Bruce Shultz, who recently lauded Hillary Clinton's potential to be chief war monger. Clear Channel brandishes a unique style of doing business using the radio air waves. Clear Channel Senior VP Ed Krampf once said regarding the huge media corporation's organizing pro-war rallies, "We're capitalists. We put on what the listening audience wants."

One shouldn't be surprised, then, when Clear Channel buys stations with large audiences from the likes of Disney to expand its radio media empire, utilizing popular but political comedians such as Al Franken and well-known Florida liberal talk radio host Randi Rhodes to sell commercial time to the National Guard, computer dating firms, and local steak houses. Every 5 minutes before the traffic reports one gets a reminder, "I am the force in the storm, I am the line in the sand" in alternating male and female voices beckoning listeners to join the National Guard.

During the Air America debut last April, popular Southern Florida liberal pundit Randi Rhodes interviewed Ralph Nader who got insulted and hung up in response to her one-liners about his campaign. After Al Franken's caricatures of the Jewish bourgeoisie, one can expect a rant against the latest Rush Limbaugh commentary.

One wonders why former Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting's Counterspin host Laura Flanders, on Saturday and Sunday night Air America prime time, is drawing the marketed audience to listen to Clear Channel commercials, or how Chuck D. became part of the Clear Channel programming team. According to Executive Vice President David Goodfriend, Chuck D. and his team have been helping Clear Channel recruit in order to dispel criticism of the all-white image.

Al Franken's radio biography read over the Air America network during the 2004 Thanksgiving hiatus included his regrets in hosting, before he joined Air America, one of Clear Channel's pro-war rallies. Once, in a discussion with fellow commentators, Franken reminisced about the legacy of the Progressive cause such as wining the vote for women and ending prohibition.

With distribution on XM Radio Satellite and over 2.6 million subscribers, along with distribution to Clear Channel affiliates in every major city, Al Franken and the comedians of Air America have an opportunity to go beyond Howard Zinn's 2 minute segments on 'Majority Report' reruns with host Gene Garafaolo and actually talk about workers' struggles. Most likely one won't hear anything about the concerns of workers.

On other commercial AM stations, one might hear ads from the American Federation of Teachers asking listeners to appreciate teachers, or the AFL-CIO's latest endorsements of the Democrat on the ticket.

But tuning into Clear Channel-distributed Air America, one will hear fragmented segments as time allows, between advertisements, of just enough liberal content to sound like an open air radio talk show: portions of air time conveniently framed with suitable entertainment to keep local audiences thinking about social change from switching to another station. One will hear what represents a case study in how to manipulate markets using entertaining pundits to draw listeners to pay attention to those symbols of mainstream American ideologies promoted by corporations, found in radio commercials.

Labor at the Crossroads

BY DAVID SWANSON, ILCA

Five hundred people gathered at the City University of New York December 2 and 3 to discuss the future of the labor movement. There were some rank-and-file members in the crowd, but mostly it was made up of those who work for or write about labor. Perhaps the only points of universal agreement among the speakers and participants of the "Labor at the Crossroads" conference hosted by the Queens College Labor Resource Center and *New Labor Forum* were, first, that the labor movement needs to stop shrinking and start growing, and, second, that George W. Bush is bad news.

There was disagreement over whether restructuring the labor movement along the lines of the SEIU's "Unite to Win" proposal would help the movement grow. And there was disagreement over many other issues, including what emphasis to place on democracy and activism within the labor movement. But there was not much discussion of democracy and activism as tools to make the movement grow and gain power. The SEIU's proposal for restructuring was the focus of a plenary in the main auditorium, while such issues as union democracy were discussed in small rooms when conference participants split up into several simultaneous sessions.

The New Unity Partnership framed the debate so that many topics were treated as after-thoughts to the main project of growth (understood as restructuring). These included: democracy and activism, labor media as a shaper of public discourse, labor media as a builder of union democracy and activism, political strategy, coalition building, and international organizing. Democracy was treated as an objection to a top-down model of restructuring, and therefore as an impediment to growth. Rarely were democracy and activism presented as a way to *achieve growth.*

The project of building national labor media, promoted at this conference by, among others, *Daily News* columnist Juan Gonzalez, was also presented not as a key to growth, but as something for its own sake. While labor media were mentioned in various panels, not a single session was devoted to the topic.

Politics, too, was a separate topic. While the plenary on the first morning was called "What Will it Take to Bring About Labor's Revival? Competing Visions," the plenary on the second morning was "Labor and the 2004 Elections: What Happened and What Next?" This second discussion focused on the work that labor had done for John Kerry, not on whether a more aggressive political agenda could help build a bigger movement.

The first plenary included remarks from UNITE HERE President Bruce Raynor, IFPTE President Gregory Junemann, SEIU Executive Vice President Gerald Hudson, and CWA Executive VP Larry Cohen. Raynor opened by describing how grim things now were for American workers and suggesting that labor needs "the kind of change that leaders of the CIO brought." He noted that the idea that manufacturing jobs were high-paying jobs "was not handed down from Mt. Sinai... It was handed down by the CIO."

Raynor said that huge abuses of workers, such as the government's "wiping out pensions," can now go on without "any comment in American society." He recounted the successes UNITE HERE had had with militant strikes and demonstrations. He noted that a Democratic president created NAFTA, which had cost 800,000 jobs.

But from these observations Raynor drew a seemingly unrelated conclusion: labor needs to have fewer unions, with unions focused on industries and jurisdictions. He made four proposals. First, because we lost the presidential election, we need to spend more money next time. Second, labor should not permit one union to sign a contract that undermines another union's campaign against a company. Third, every dollar from Union Privilege credit cards should go to a Wal-Mart campaign. And fourth, unions should pay less money to the AFL-CIO and invest more in their own organizing.

Junemann spoke second, stressing that he was speaking on behalf of a smaller union (56,000 members). He offered no bullet-point plan for success, but he presented a very different model. All IFPTE leaders come from the rank and file, staff-to-member ratio is "incredibly low," dues are low, locals are run by members, and the international by the locals. Using this model, the IFPTE has doubled in size over the past 10 years.

Junemann proposed that the AFL-CIO send temporary teams around the country to help with campaigns. "We need to disassemble the whale and put together a school of piranhas." He proposed greater study of what future jobs will be and more training of members for future needs. He called for representation for the 25 percent of the work force that is "non-traditional," that is working on contracts or as freelancers. And he suggested that U.S. labor work more closely with unions around the world.

Junemann did not propose that other unions follow the IFPTE's strategy for success through membership control. But he did express opposition to the SEIU model: "Forced mergers are not strategic," he said. "Our members want to remain a low-cost, self-directed union with the members in charge. They will not merge with a union that doesn't have that model."

Hudson spoke next, and referred to the SEIU's 10-point "Unite to Win" proposal. He argued that "size matters," that larger unions are stronger, that "diversity matters," that the movement is "too male, too pale, and too stale," and that "unity matters," that the number of unions should be drastically reduced through mergers. Of 61 unions, he said, 40 are smaller than the SEIU's Local 1199.

"We need to disassemble the whale and put together a school of piranhas..."

Hudson proposed that the AFL-CIO collect half what it does now from "lead unions," and that unions invest at least 20 percent of their international budget and 10 percent at the local level in organizing. The AFL-CIO, he said, should help to create unions in industries and regions that need them. And labor should build global alliances, Hudson said, based on industry or company.

The SEIU's proposal was the focus of many of the questions from the audience following the speakers, as well as of a follow-up "editorial roundtable" with four speakers responding to the plenary and audience members asking them additional questions.

But first, Cohen of the CWA presented a new 10-point plan. He handed it out on paper, and it can now be found on the SEIU's Unite to Win website. Cohen's plan differs significantly from the SEIU's. It relegates mergers to point 9, which reads in its entirety: "In the past 10 years, about 50 national unions have merged. This trend will undoubtedly continue. The issue is how mergers can change union workplaces, lead to more active shop stewards and greater member involvement, and create more effective organizing, collective bargaining and political action."

Cohen's first two points focus on collective bargaining. Points three and five propose strengthening the role of shop stewards and allowing them to democratically elect central labor council leaders. Point four proposes that the AFL-CIO provide strike benefits of at least $200 per week for every striking worker. Point six proposes a democratic process for political endorsements, combined with discouraging local unions from supporting a candidate not supported by the majority of unions. The other points address international alliances, social action (emphasizing national health care and pensions), and "narrowing and sharpening" the focus of the AFL-CIO.

"If anyone in this room," Cohen said, "thinks that we're going to change collective bargaining rights based on how we structure rather than how we mobilize, they're mistaken." But as to how labor should be structured, Cohen suggested that organization by industry could not be the only factor. Some companies are dominant in many industries. Organization must take into account: employer, industry, place and type of jobs.

Many audience members lined up for a turn at a microphone. Several focused on

continued next page



What's wrong with SEIU and CWA plans to revitalize labor movement?

BY HARRY KELBER, LABOR TALK

For nearly 10 years, labor's most influential union leaders, including AFL-CIO President John Sweeney and the 51-member Executive Council, have grappled with the problem of revitalizing the labor movement, but they've failed to arrest the continuing decline in membership and bargaining power.

Responding to criticism, they seem to have tried everything. Not enough money spent on organizing? They increased the AFL budget for organizing to 30% and urged affiliates to do the same. Not enough organizers? They hired hundreds more. Not enough diversity? They hired young African-American and Latino organizers, many of them women.

Not enough training? They poured money into the Organizing Institute and improved its training programs. Too many losing recruitment drives? They called on top-level strategists to help develop winning campaigns. They created the Union Cities program to enable central labor councils to play an active role in local organizing.

They conducted countless seminars, workshops and classes on improving organizing. They published tons of brochures, booklets and leaflets to help unions in organizing campaigns. They adopted strong resolutions calling for more aggressive action on recruiting.

So why didn't any of this work? AFL-CIO leaders blame three factors: the economy, anti-union employers, and President George W. Bush. They do not blame themselves.

No one doubts that the labor movement is in the throes of a deepening crisis, but there is no agreement what to do about it.

Andy Stern, president of the Service Employees International Union, says he has the answer. What is needed is to merge the AFL-CIO's 61 international unions into no more than twenty, with each mega-union representing a specific sector of the economy. Stern says these enlarged unions, with their greater resources, would be able to conduct winning campaigns against major corporations like Wal-Mart.

Stern's restructuring plan, which has received extensive media coverage, has very little support from most unions and rank-and-filers outside the SEIU. But even on the wild assumption that the plan would be approved, what evidence is there that forced mergers would increase union membership or economic power? In fact, there is evidence to the contrary.

When the AFL and CIO merged in 1955, they had 104 unions with a combined 16 million members. Today, 49 years later, the AFL-CIO's 61 internationals represent about 13 million members. Despite those 43 mergers, organized labor suffered a net loss of 3 million members. How does Stern explain that?

The SEIU plan emphasizes the importance of density (the ratio of union members in a given industry or region) in its campaign to re-energize the labor movement. Of course, density is important, but density is achieved only by successful recruiting. Stern has not spelled out organizing strategies that are essentially different from those currently in use that have failed.

To counter SEIU's 10-point Unite to Win!, CWA executive vice president Larry Cohen has come up with a 10-point plan of his own: American Labor – Working Together. Cohen, who does not call for radically repackaging the AFL-CIO structure, lists policies that progressive unionists have advocated for some time, such as a strong shop steward system, an ample national strike fund, and more effective collective bargaining.

Both plans have several features in common: they favor a more aggressive effort on health care reform, expanded political action, more funds and resources devoted to organizing, and building a global labor movement. These ideas have been around for a long time and there are hardly any AFL-CIO affiliates that would disagree with them.

What's wrong with the plans is they provide no significant role for the AFL-CIO's 13 million members, labor's most precious and most neglected asset. Stern and Cohen are making the same fatal mistake as did Sweeney and the heavy hitters on the Executive Council: that if they come up with the right plan, millions of union members will automatically follow them. As Leo Gerard, president of the United Steel Workers, said of Stern and his colleagues in the New Union Partnership during an interview: "These are five guys sitting around and talking. They don't represent the labor movement."

The starting point for any labor leader who has a plan to revitalize the labor movement is to inspire enthusiastic support from a substantial cross-section of the AFL-CIO membership. Stern, Cohen and the others want to impose their plans simply by winning Executive Council approval. It hasn't worked in the past 10 years and it won't work now.

Kelber's weekly "LaborTalk" column can be found at www.laboreducator.org

problems people saw with forced mergers, such as when a union with a strong political position is urged to merge with unions that don't share the position. Others argued that "Unite to Win" has too much about structure, and that size and unity cannot save a union from hostile legislation – as in the cases of the trucking and telephone industries.

CWA organizer Steve Early asked Raynor: "Bruce, you've called union democracy one of our faults. Greg made a case for why it's a strength. How will you and the NUPsters correct this fault?"

Raynor replied that labor needs to "line up contracts" in order to oppose multi-national corporations. "Workers get that," he said. Junemann had a different answer. Rather than claiming that workers understand a leadership decision, he said he preferred to "give workers all the information and trust them to make a good decision."

Hudson, for his part, said that rank-and-file democracy is "not incompatible with structural adjustment." He said the SEIU proposal focuses on structure, because that's "the hard stuff." Building a social movement, he suggested, is easy rhetoric, whereas restructuring involves difficult concrete decisions.

Peter Hogness, editor of the *Clarion*, PSC-CUNY/AFT 2334, asked the four speakers if they would encourage their union publications to devote space to the debate that has been opened by the NUP. He also pointed out that many of the comments on the Unite to Win website were posted anonymously. He asked Hudson if he would state that no staff would be fired and no local suffer retribution for their comments, and if he would seek out dissenters and ask them to post comments. Hudson's reply was that "nobody should be penalized," which was perhaps not necessarily the same as "nobody will be penalized."

One audience member asked why labor doesn't fight for single-payer health care. When Raynor replied that it "had no chance," an audience member shouted out "It absolutely does!" Junemann proposed working for single-payer at the state level, and a later questioner noted that labor had already won that fight in Hawaii.

Another questioner asked when the labor movement would "break its silence" on the war. Junemann claimed that the AFL-CIO "strongly opposed the war." But murmurs of disbelief from the audience caused him to express uncertainty. The AFL-CIO, in fact, has yet to take a position on the war or to even acknowledge in its magazine that there is a war. AFL-CIO political director Karen Ackerman would claim in the next day's plenary that the labor movement has no position on the war and therefore could not talk to its members about it as part of a political campaign.

The roundtable that followed opened up a broader perspective, directing attention to the global economy, the war and the U.S. empire. Speakers included Bill Fletcher of TransAfrica Forum, Elaine Bernard of Harvard University, Juan Gonzalez of the *Daily News*, and Ed Ott of the NYC Central Labor Council.

"The core question," said Fletcher, "is not structure but purpose." The purpose, he suggested, should be "class struggle and social uplift."

"Let's set the agenda," said Bernard. "That will determine the politics." We have the power, she said, to put health care for all on the agenda. We need members involved every day in determining where we go.

"You don't start with structure. You start with strategy."

"Real debate," Bernard said, in apparent reference to the SEIU proposal, "does not include ultimatums." For the SEIU to leave the AFL-CIO, she said, was not a bad idea. In Canada, federations compete for union affiliation, a process the members control.

Ott proposed a "split with no acrimony" for five years, with no raiding.

Gonzalez considered it a grave error for labor not to have strongly opposed the war. "The labor movement has not grasped the fact that we are in a labor movement in the most powerful, dominant and hegemonic empire the world has ever seen."

We lament media coverage, Gonzalez said, but an international union president wants to spend more on politics. That money pays for candidates' advertisements on the media. Why not cut out the middle man and make our own media? "If you want to raise a lot of money, don't spend it by giving it to the Democratic Party. Spend it creating an independent media system!"

"Why has the labor movement not tackled having its own space? It's astounding! ... Why spend money on advertising on other channels? Why not have our own channel?"

Gonzalez' proposal received support from the audience. Following questions from the floor, he amplified his suggestion: "Labor has to have a broadcast voice on radio or television." If there can be food channels and cartoon channels, he said, "why has the labor movement not tackled having its own space? It's astounding to me! Why spend money on advertising on other channels? Why not have our own channel?"

A panel held later in the day in a small room expanded the debate further. The panel was called "Does Union Democracy Matter?" and it included Early of CWA and Gregor Murray of the University of Montreal, with Barbara Bowen of the AFT as commentator.

Murray echoed Bernard's argument that competition could be good. But he pointed out that in Canada workers can choose to affiliate with another union without decertifying. "You've never seen such responsive Teamster and UFCW locals," he said.

He argued that restructuring would not build strength without democracy. "You can organize everyone in a sector, but not have power if you don't organize strength within." And to have that strength, Murray said, you need small locals. "Mega locals suck the life out of the labor movement." Polls of workers in Canada, he said, find that nearly all union members agree that unions are needed, but far from all agree with basic principles, such as that strikes are needed, that workers should never cross picket lines, or that all workers should be organized. Those who do agree in large numbers with those principles are members of unions with greater democracy.

Early handed out internal SEIU communications and read quotes from SEIU President Andy Stern to make a case that "It is an article of faith in NUPsterism that democracy doesn't matter." People, he said, who in 1968 in the Students for a Democratic Society had promoted participatory democracy have now reversed course.

Early said that the SEIU's Stephen Lerner had argued that you could not have union democracy if only 10 percent of workers are in unions. What percentage would you have to reach, Early asked, before you could start talking about union democracy? He went on to argue that it might be difficult to organize a large percentage of the workforce without union democracy. History shows, Early said, that unions without democracy degenerate into corrupt, gangster-run enterprises. He cited the history of the mineworkers, the teamsters, and the steelworkers.

"CWA is exactly the sort of union the NUPsters say shouldn't exist," said Early. "Sixty percent of our workers should be traded away like baseball cards [because of the industries they work in]. But workers make a choice which union to go with."

Asked about using labor media to build union democracy and strength, Early replied that it is difficult to create a democratic labor publication without a reform movement first. He gave as examples reform movements in the Mineworkers (1972) and more recently in the Teamsters, which were followed by democratization in those unions' communications.

Early cited the Newspaper Guild *Reporter* as an example of good democratic labor media. Bowen praised CWA 1180's publication as the same. And veteran labor communicator Harry Kelber noted that PACE's magazine had begun printing more letters to the editor.

A number of questions in this session addressed the division of topics noted at the start of this article. How do we both grow and do democracy, they asked. "The NUPsters won't talk about democracy, and this panel says nothing about growth." Early replied that the CWA's success in the North East provided a model for growth based on "bottom-up organizing and member activism."

If so, that model failed to dominate the debates at this two-day convention, which continued to focus on the proposal to restructure. And the AFL-CIO is not proposing any model of its own. Just as labor's recent political work was made more difficult by its endorsement of a corporate, free-trade, pro-private-health insurance, pro-war candidate without a vision of his own to oppose to Bush's, labor's debate over how to revive the movement is limited by the AFL-CIO's failure to develop an inspiring vision clearly opposed to the SEIU's, a situation that has some organizers referring to the AFL-CIO as "SEIU Lite." It may be that the CWA is moving things slowly in the direction of an AFL-CIO vision for labor. Time will tell.

Swanson is media coordinator for the International Labor Communications Association, http://ILCAonline.org



Living Wage rally at Swarthmore College

150 Living Wage supporters (including a half-dozen Wobblies) rallied Dec. 4, demanding that Swarthmore College increase minimum pay to $10.38 an hour and extend health coverage to workers' families. The college spends more than a half million dollars each year on investment bankers to manage its endowment, but for years maintained that it could not afford to meet demands for a living wage. The college's Board of Visitors did accept the proposal, which fell far short of organizers' initial demands, while protesters rallied outside, culminating a four-year campaign by workers and student supporters. IWW General Secretary-Treasurer Alexis Buss spoke at the rally, urging workers to continue organizing – noting that it was not enough merely to "live"; workers are entitled to much more. Several speakers noted that $10.38 was only a beginning, and did not cover the true cost of living in the area. Others noted that the long struggle was evidence of a lack of true democracy at the college.

Ironworkers sued for fighting nonunion contractors

Six New England steel-working firms have filed an antitrust lawsuit against Local 7 of the Iron Workers union, alleging that the union shut out nonunion contractors from major construction projects in the region by picketing and striking nonunion jobs, and by offering special payments to union contractors to subsidize wage costs and help them win contracts. The union represents about 3,300 ironworkers across Massachusetts.

The suit comes a year after Local 7 settled a complaint by Ajax Construction that accused union members of causing about $8,000 worth of damage at a construction site when 20 men allegedly smashed trucks and equipment. However, most of the activities the lawsuit complains of are clearly legal, and have been since the Norris-LaGuardia act overturned judge-made laws holding labor unions to be unlawful conspiracies.

San Francisco hotel workers return without contract

Some 4,300 San Francisco hotel workers returned to their jobs Nov. 23, under a 60-day cooling off period negotiated with the hotel operators by Mayor Gavin Newsome in order to rescue the city's tourism industry during the busy holiday season. The truce ended 38 days of sometimes noisy picketing outside 14 of San Francisco's most prominent hotels, which had locked out union employees.

The hotels have resumed bargaining, but without the pressure of lost profits will have little incentive to address workers' concerns, including preserving health coverage and bringing contract expiration dates around the country into line with each other in order to restore union power at the bargaining table. If the operators remain intransigent, workers would be faced with a choice between being locked out once again, this time during the slack season when employers could more easily wait them out, or capitulating.

The hotel bosses had been counting on the loss of health benefits to force workers to surrender, but that threat was undermined when insurers agreed to extend the benefits while the union arbitrated management's refusal to allow a jointly administered benefits fund to be tapped to cover premiums.

While UNITE HERE is portraying the end of the lock-out as a union victory, most observers believe union negotiators – much like the Atlantic City strike – will abandon their bid for coordinated contract expiration dates in exchange for preserving the existing benefits package.

Georgia bosses save $50 mill by attacking unemployed

The state of Georgia is cutting the bosses' unemployment insurance premiums by $50 million next year, reflecting the success of "reforms" that forced hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers in the state to accept ill-paid jobs outside their field under threat of losing their benefits.

Teamsters join fray

As the AFL-CIO prepares for a contentious January Executive Council meeting dedicated to considering restructuring proposals, the Teamsters are floating a proposal to slash the AFL budget and pour tens of millions of the remaining funds into a four-year campaign of political and union organizing in swing states.

Stripping the mask off Starbucks...

continued from page 3

would be jointly picketing a Starbucks outlet in Glasgow city centre). It was a folded flier of four pages, two on the NY Baristas fight and two on recent events in Chiapas. The two groups were of one mind, united in a common purpose, with one face to the world.

Between the Castle and where we waited for the police stands the pub named for one of the city's most famous sons, Deacon Brodie. A soberly respectable and married town councillor by day, a burglar, mugger and hard-drinking womaniser by night, Brodie was "a man harassed below a mountain of duplicity, slinking from magistrate's supper-room to a thieves' den." So wrote Robert Louis Stevenson, who credited the two-faced Deacon Brodie as the inspiration for his dark tale of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. The Deacon's double life is an excellent allegory for the Starbucks Corporation and its two-faced duplicity. Starbucks' stated policy of social philanthropy and its in-store napkins boasting 'made from recycled paper' are the corporation's pleasant public face. Behind the friendly facade something sinister hides, as the Chiapas support group made clear in the flier:

The mask slips

Only 2% of Starbucks' coffee is 'Fair Trade.' All their 7,500 shops carry leaflets proclaiming the origins of this fair trade coffee in a biosphere in Chiapas, S. Mexico. The company website announces its commitment to fair trade, sound environmental policies and corporate responsibility. Their fair trade coffee program is managed by Conservation International, a notorious 'greenwash' company, backed by US state agencies and multinationals. CI's avowed aim is to "conserve the Earth's living natural heritage, our global biodiversity, and to demonstrate that human societies are able to live harmoniously with nature." CI operates in over 30 countries and often claims that indigenous communities threaten the environment. But a peek behind CI's mask of concerned responsibility reveals some disturbing facts. CI accuses indigenous communities of destroying rainforest in Monte Azules in Chiapas. At the same time CI is forging links with Grupo Pulsar, a Mexican agribusiness/biotech corporation that promotes destructive monoculture in Chiapas and makes tax-free donations to CI in return for bio-prospecting services in the bioreserve. Indigenous groups there have meantime outlawed slash-and-burn techniques and now practice sustainable organic agriculture. Conservation International's claims are being used by the Mexican government as a pretext to evict Zapatista supporters from the rain forests.

In 2001 CI provided aerial photographs of settlements in the Montes Azules biosphere, and demanded that these settlements, many containing Zapatista supporters and refugees from paramilitary violence, be evicted. Villagers in the area have since been subjected to a campaign of harassment by government authorities and paramilitaries, and remain under threat of eviction.

CI supports the Meso American Biological corridor project, a 'green front' for the Plan Puebla Panama, a massive scheme to build a new network of roads, assembly plants and sweatshops throughout Central America, providing cheap exploitable labour for multinationals and a front for corporate bio-piracy. The PPP promotes commercial logging, tourist developments, sweatshop factories, bio-prospecting, oil exploration and hydroelectric schemes.

None of this sits well with CI's avowed policies of social and environmental philanthropy. CI's partners and donors include: Citigroup, ExxonMobil, Ford, Gap, Grupo Pulsar, J.P. Morgan, Monsanto, McDonalds, Sony, United Airlines, Walt Disney and of course Starbucks. CI is also funded by a host of US government agencies. A June 2003 report by the Chiapas-based Centre for Political Analysis dubbed CI a "Trojan horse of the U.S. government and transnational corporations." In reality CI's role is to access and buy mineral-rich and biodiverse areas across the planet, and place them at the disposal of multinational corporations.

> "We see our struggles for humane wages and working conditions as united. No longer will Starbucks be allowed to run roughshod over its Baristas or coffee farmers."
>
> — *Daniel Gross*

Starbucks is a donor and partner of Conservation International, and is therefore complicit in CI's hidden war on indigenous communities. From the point of production to the point of consumption the Starbucks story is one of oppression and exploitation.

Meanwhile in Edinburgh

The cops arrived. They weren't interested. "It's okay. You can stay as long as you want as long as you don't obstruct pedestrians." We knew that. But amazingly they didn't tell us to take the IWW banner from in front of Starbucks window, and there it stayed for four hours, throwing a pinkish light over part of the shop.

The free Zapatista coffee was a great hit. Cup after cup was dished out along with the fliers and when the huge flask was empty people actually waited, chatting, till it was replenished at a supporter's nearby home and brought back. 1,000 fliers were handed out to passers-by. Many who would have gone into Starbucks didn't. Dozens of names and email addresses were collected from those who wanted further info. The street in front of the store took on the air of a friendly social space and there was a sense of reclaiming the street. Only when it got dark and freezing did we depart.

A similar joint IWW/Zap picket, along with a few members of libertarian groups, was held in Glasgow's Sauchiehall Street with the free Chiapas coffee much enjoyed. A report was swiftly sent to the Baristas in NY. Jail-threatened IWW organiser Dan Gross replied, "I can't really put into words how incredible your action was to us workers here."

Ben Ferguson, secretary of IWW general membership branch in NYC, declared himself "seriously impressed and inspired by the creativity of your important action today... This is certainly a milestone in a rapidly growing campaign." We replied that it had been a pleasure.

"If our strategic partnership with Global Exchange is to mean anything," Ben's email went on, "then similar actions need to happen here as well."

Another report arrived. In Bristol in southeast England the Zapatistas had gone it alone, picketing a city shopping mall. "An information point and a mini café were set up outside Starbucks," ran the Indymedia report, "to expose the company's complicity in state violence and oppression. Despite an initial attempt by security to move us on we stood our ground and maintained a continued presence for over two hours. One copper proclaimed that our Starbucks Sucks banner was offensive enough to warrant arrest. He clearly failed to notice the leaflet itself, which didn't mince its words. Free Zapatista coffee was given out which went down well in the cold."

Just in: Aberdeen, Scotland's 'Granite City,' witnessed another Starbucks protest a week after the others. With no IWW or Zap group in Aberdeen this protest was by local 'anticapitalists.' There is something in the air – a growing detestation of Starbucks and all it stands for that is crystallising into direct action against the corporation's outlets. We should build on this.

Take action against Starbucks

Edinburgh IWW and EdinChiapas Solidarity are calling for a joint Day of Action against Starbucks on Saturday January 8, in the lead-up to Dan Gross' trial. The IWW's British Isles Regional Organising Committee will be passing on this call to all its members, and Edinburgh's Zapatista solidarity group will be echoing the call for action along the indigenous/anticapitalist network. We hope the call will be taken up abroad – especially in the U.S. As Ben Ferguson says, "similar actions need to happen here as well..."

On 3 December the New York Baristas Union sent a resolution thanking us for our support and solidarity "with workers' efforts to organise the world's largest coffee chain and ... highlighting the ground-breaking coalition between Starbucks café workers and those who grow the coffee," adding that "the British IWW embodies a truly international One Big Union" and pledging "our everlasting appreciation and relentless solidarity to the British IWW." We return the pledge, and hope that our planned Day of Action on 8 January is a success.

January 2005 is, of course, the first month of the IWW's Centenary Year. Celebrations of our past are promised. It's good to look back where we came from, yes. But it's important to go forward into the future as a fighting union. What better way to open our Centenary Year than with a day of international solidarity actions with the embattled Baristas and Zapatistas, active support for our prison-threatened fellow worker, Dan Gross?

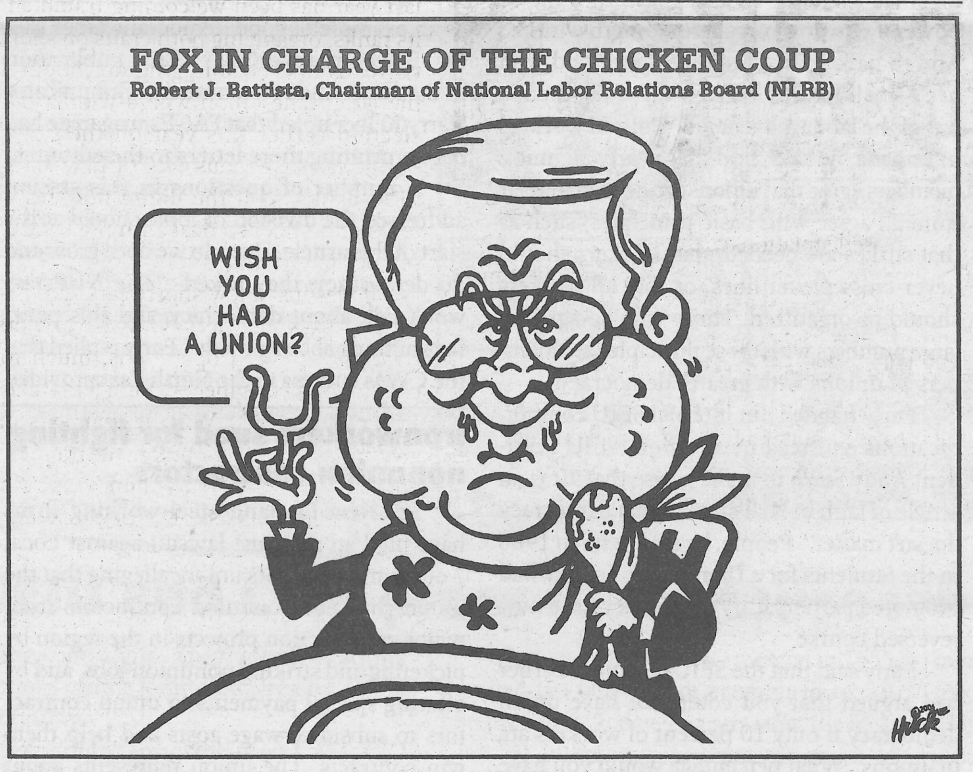
NLRB stripping U.S. workers of rights

As employers retaliate against pro-union workers with impunity, the government agency charged with enforcing U.S. labor law has issued a string of decisions that dramatically reverse and erode workers' legal protections. The National Labor Relations Board, whose members are appointed by the president, recently reversed a long-standing precedent and made it easier for employers to get away with threats to close a facility if workers unionize. Other recent decisions strip disabled workers and teaching assistants of protection under the NLRA and prohibit communication between workers expressing displeasure over working conditions.

According to official NLRB figures, a worker in the United States is fired or discriminated against every 23 minutes for exercising his or her freedom of association on the job.

This figure is derived from the number of back pay awards issued by the Board, and so does not include cases where employers made threats but did not act upon them in ways that cost workers money (typically because the workers were successfully intimidated from continuing with their union activity). It also does not include cases where workers were unable to prove that they were the victim of unlawful conduct to the Board's satisfaction, typically because there no witnesses available, or the millions of workers who work in workplaces not covered by the National Labor Relations Act.

In half or more of all union organizing campaigns, employers threaten to close a facility if workers unionize, and the Board has historically held that this is an Unfair Labor Practice (ordering the employer not to do it any more, but imposing no sanctions) that prevents workers from freely deciding whether they wish union representation. Now the NLRB has ruled that workers must prove the employer actively spread a plant closing threat among its employees in order to win a new election.



According to the dissenting NLRB members, "Since the 1950s, at least, the Board rightly has recognized that when an employer threatens to close a plant if the union wins a representation election, the threat very likely will make the rounds of the workplace. It is, after all, an extraordinarily powerful message, for it implies the end of every employee's job."

Over the past several months, a divided NLRB has issued a string of decisions that strip workers of legal protections. In November, employees of temp agencies were barred from organizing with regular employees without both employer and agency permission. Prohibitions on communications between workers expressing displeasure or anger over working conditions were ruled lawful last month, and are no longer assumed to interfere with employee free speech around union activity. In September, the NLRB ruled that disabled workers who receive rehabilitative services from employers should not be classified as workers and are therefore ineligible to form unions under the limited protections of federal law. The agency released a similar decision in July for graduate teaching and research assistants, ruling that they are students and not employees.

In observance of International Human Rights Day this December 10th, the union-backed American Rights at Work launched a website(www.americanrightsatwork.org) to call attention to the rampant abuse of fundamental labor rights in the United States. International Human Rights Day commemorates the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states, "Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests."

Through its Workers' Rights Clearinghouse, American Rights at Work has collected hundreds of cases illustrating rampant violations of U.S. labor law and human rights standards. For example, Maria Guadalupe Garcia, a nursing home worker from Los Angeles, was held captive in an elevator mid-floor with a supervisor until she agreed to sign a petition to do away with the union.

Rail workers face tough fight

BY RON KAMINKOW
RAILROAD WORKERS I.U. 520

The National Carriers' Conference Committee, representing the largest U.S. freight railroad companies, has served notice to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (now affiliated with the Teamsters) and the United Transportation Union that in the upcoming round of collective bargaining the carriers are not only pursuing the expected demands for give-backs in health insurance and work rules – they are also seeking to transform the face of railroading forever through craft consolidation, job eliminations, and a complete restructuring of the Federal Employers' Liability Act governing compensation for on-the-job injuries in the rail industry. In addition, the carriers want additional restrictions on the right to strike or take other "self-help" activities, including crushing sanctions against employees if and when they engage in such actions.

The NCCC claims that the railroads' current agreement "produces relentless labor cost inflation" by requiring unnecessary hiring and imposing "above-market" wage and benefit costs. Therefore the carriers propose consolidating all train and engine positions (engineer, conductor, brakeman, etc.) into a new position to be renamed "transportation employee." Trainmen and engineers are presently covered by separate contracts. While the proposal does not spell out the bosses' plans in detail, there can be no doubt what this means: "crew size shall be based on operational needs as determined by the railroad." Having eliminated thousands of yard engineer positions across the country in the last few years with the implementation of Remote Control Operations, the carriers have now set their sights on achieving single employee operation of over-the-road trains, eliminating the conductor position.

The Carriers' proposal also gripes about employees taking unscheduled time off work, and proposes that employees who fail to meet the railroad's attendance standard have their benefits cut. This is a particularly insulting demand, considering that engineers and trainmen traditionally have accumulated no sick leave.

Perhaps the most controversial section of the proposal would replace the existing FELA legislation with a "no-fault" system of compensation for injuries. As reduced staffing has led to many serious injuries, carriers have been ordered to make large payments to workers who are critically injured due to company negligence. The carriers say a no-fault system modeled on workers' compensation laws would result in much smaller payments to injured workers, and so reduce their costs.

The NCCC also proposes new restrictions on the right to strike and other industrial action. While the carriers do not propose amending the Railway Labor Act, they are demanding an agreement for ten days' advance written notice of any picket, strike, boycott, slowdown or other "self-help" activity. In addition, the NCCC is demanding the right to suspend any wage and protective provisions that during *any* form of job action.

The carriers appear to be poised to launch an all-out assault upon the wages, benefits and work rules of the nation's railroaders. Over the past 25 years or so, the implementation of new technology has decimated the ranks of U.S. railroaders. Firemen, brakemen, switchmen, and operators have been largely eliminated. Other crafts, including dispatchers, clerks, maintenance-of-way and mechanical personnel, have seen their numbers eroded through new technology, job consolidations and outsourcing.

During this period, there were a number of strikes which were largely defeated by the carriers. The national strikes were quickly ended when the unions were ordered back to work by the U.S. Congress. The unions were then subject to hostile rulings by a stacked Presidential Emergency Board. Rail workers and their unions are covered by the Railway Labor Act, which provides for an extremely complex and convoluted process whereby unions may take "self-help" action only after a lengthy period of negotiation, notification, cooling off, etc. Once these hoops are carefully jumped through, Congress can simply issue a back-to-work order. This process usually ends with the president appointing a three-member PEB which issues a binding decision upon the union(s).

Of course, the NCCC proposal is no more than a "wish list," a vision of a world in which the carriers would love to operate. What they are capable of winning is inversely proportional to how much the unions and the rank-and-file railroader are ready to resist. Unfortunately, in the face of this assault, the two craft unions that represent train and engine employees – the BLE&T and the UTU – are beset by division and scandal. Never on friendly terms, the two unions have become increasingly hostile to one another following failed merger attempts. The UTU withdrew from the AFL-CIO after being charged with raiding the BLE, and the latter entered what for some engineers is an uncomfortable marriage with the Teamsters. Meanwhile the UTU has been plagued by scandal at its highest levels, with both its president and past president convicted of racketeering charges.

This contract struggle will come as a first test of the newly reconstituted BLE&T, a union that has traditionally represented just one craft – the engineers – but for the last year has been welcoming trainmen into its ranks, organizing both crafts on short line railroads and encouraging defections from the UTU. The union won a winner-take-all election earlier this year on the Canadian Pacific, adding thousands of new trainmen to its ranks. Will the union now resist the temptation to cut a deal with the NCCC and sell out the trainmen?

It was just a few short years ago that the UTU itself cut a deal with the carriers on remote controlled operations, much to the chagrin of the engineers union (see *Industrial Worker,* May 2003). Will the engineers' union and the track workers' union, the Brotherhood of Maintenance-of-Way Employees (also affiliated to the Teamsters), stick together and back each other up in negotiations?

Perhaps the biggest unknown: will the IBT use its strength in the transportation industry to support the railroaders? And if "self-help" is taken by the nation's railroaders, will the IBT leadership and the rank-and-file in trucking act in solidarity with the railroaders by taking direct action, including the refusal to handle struck freight? If such job action comes to pass, this would assuredly be a real test of Hoffa's "seamless transportation union" (see Industrial Worker, March 2004).

And what of the UTU? With this latest concerted attack by the carriers upon the "running trades," the trainmen (conductors) appear to have the most to lose. Divided and conquered for years, are the various brotherhoods possibly on the threshold of a new era of unity and solidarity? Or will the NCCC's offensive simply result in even further division, disarray and demoralization?

For well over a hundred years, rail labor has been artificially divided along craft lines. At one point, 26 different craft unions represented workers on the nation's railroads, a number which has now been pared down to a dozen or so. The future will no doubt see further mergers, amalgamations and recombinations as the aging and crippled craft unions attempt to survive. The only way to stave off the carriers' offensive is to stand united across crafts and across union lines. The unions must put aside their differences and make unity in the face of the NCCC union-busting proposal their top priority. An immediate joint proclamation by the leadership of all rail labor, not just the BLE and UTU, that we will unite against the NCCC initiative would be a good start. But ultimately it's up to us – the rank-and-file – to stand up for each other across crafts and fight back.

Euro Social Forum...

continued from page 1

said that a program of an alternative Europe organized on a continental level is necessary. "We need it to be 'work for all humans,'" she said, in order to challenge the division of workers into legal and illegal. "We don't win by going along with the liberal model."

On the topic of the Iraq war, British workers were clearly smarting from the flip-flop labour leaders did at a New Labour convention several weeks earlier.

Yunus Bakhsh, a health worker on the UNISON national executive committee, stood from the audience and warned that labour must have leadership independent of political parties. Mainstream labour leaders "cannot and will not make the decisions to break from the parties that support the war in the Middle East."

He called for a February 19 day of action against the war, which he said was "the military version of neoliberalism." Visibly angry, Bakhsh said, "We cannot defend our jobs, our industries, at the same time the ruling class is waging a war in the Middle East."

Postal worker Jane Loftus also called for workers to take action. "If you don't deal with the war, you are not dealing with the issues facing workers because it's all inter-related."

The European Social Forum is the regional incarnation of the carnival of ideas first held as the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and most recently in Mumbai, India.

Fight for shorter Hours

ORGANIZATION

Unpaid wage slavery

The Nov. 19 *New York Times* reports that growing numbers of workers are fighting back against being forced to work off the clock. The *Times* interviewed workers who said they were forced into off-the-clock work at a variety of companies, from grocery stores to investment banks to hairstylists.

In April, the Pleasantview Healthcare Center paid $44,887 in back wages after the Labor Department found off-the-clock violations involving 41 workers – many of them clocked out while finishing their daily tasks. In February, the department recovered $180,000 from Hanna Steel after finding that 522 workers had been forced to begin work five minutes before their regular shifts started. Last November, the Department announced a $4.8 million settlement with T-Mobile, the wireless telephone company, after finding that it had forced 20,500 call-center employees to work off the clock by making them show up 10 to 15 minutes before their scheduled clock-in time.

Some companies force workers to come in early or stay late to finish up work off the clock; others order them to clock out during slow periods but remain on the premises in case customers arrive. Salaried workers are often considered exempt from overtime pay, and their hours are typically not recorded.

Adam T. Klein, a lawyer who has brought off-the-clock lawsuits against A&P and J. P. Morgan Chase, said many companies push for unpaid work because it is an easy way to bolster profits. "Corporate profits are derived from efficiency, and every extra minute off the clock they can squeeze out of a worker generates profits to the bottom line," he said.

Managers often persuade workers and supervisors to work off the clock by promising promotions and other rewards or by threatening those who refuse with demotions or fewer paid hours.

The Labor Department pointed to increased violations as one of its justifications for recent rule changes stripping overtime protection from millions of workers.

Wal-Mart's time theft

Wal-Mart is facing lawsuits in more than 30 states charging the giant retailer with forcing workers to put in off-the-clock work to avoid paying overtime and keep labor costs down.

Wal-Mart settled a case involving 69,000 workers in Colorado for $50 million four years ago. It has since adjusted its registers so that cashiers who have clocked out can not continue ringing up customers. But many workers report being forced to put in unpaid labor every day.

Ontario ends 60-hour week

Ontario employers will now need written consent before assigning workers to more than 48 hours in a week, abolishing the 60-hour work week put in place by the former Conservative government. Hundreds of thousands were forced to work more than 48 hour weeks last year.

France 'relaxes' 35-hour law

The French government says it will "relax" its 35-hour week law to allow employees to "voluntarily" put in longer hours. "Working more creates more wealth, more economic growth and more jobs," said Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin. "I want to enable employees who want to work more to earn more, and to allow companies to gain more dynamism, spurring them to hire again."

Raffarin also announced plans to lift the legal ceiling on annual overtime from 180 hours to 220 hours.

Continental Carbon workers win 42-month fight

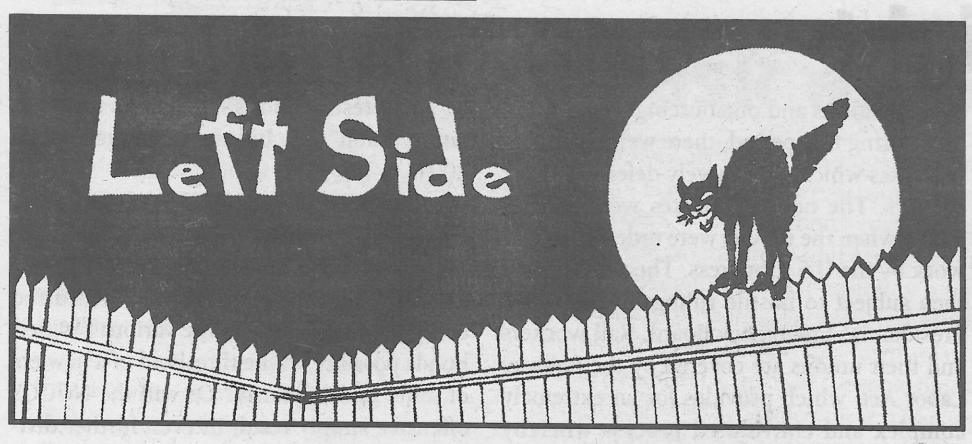
A three-and-one-half year lockout at Continental Carbon in Ponca City, Okla., ended Dec. 2 with the ratification of a new five-year contract. The union waged an international campaign against the company's Taiwan-based owners which convinced many customers to switch suppliers.

Continental Carbon has 45 days to rid the plant of scabs, and bring back 49 of the 86 locked-out workers. Fifteen workers found alternative jobs during the struggle, and the rest are on a recall list and will be brought back as business revives.

The new contract raises wages by 2 percent in each of its five years, and preserves health and pension benefits. Continental had demanded wage cuts, dramatic increases in health insurance premiums, and cuts in clean-up pay.

The struggle isn't quite over, since pollution violation lawsuits filed by PACE and neighboring Native American tribes over damage to the river in Ponca City, have not been settled. The settlement also provides for a joint health and safety committee to address environmental and safety problems.

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The other day, as I was walking along minding my own business, I was startled by a lusty slap on my back. Whirling around to confront my assailant, I saw it was none other than dear old Uncle Hornplanter.

"Hey nephew," he says, "it looks like we have survived our mid-winter madness and now we can look forward to a little tranquility."

"Not so fast uncle," say I. "Haven't you forgotten this is an election year?"

"Yeah, you're right about that. But it's funny how the palefaces have forgotten to live each day at a time; they keep making more and more holidays that keep emptying our pockets. What people call Thanksgiving is just another day to us. Some of your ancestors came over here, not knowing the land and not knowing how to work it – you damn near died from starvation. My ancestors took pity on you and showed you how to work the land. And now you call it Thanksgiving."

"But Mr. Hornplanter, Thanksgiving commemorates a great discovery."

"What great discovery? We discovered this land thousands of years before you Europeans came down out of the trees, and now you want to take credit?"

"It commemorates the opening of a new age, the beginning of civilization..."

"Civilization? You mean with your atom bombs and industrial pollution and death camps? Go on!"

"Remember, Mr. Hornplanter, when we came over you were just a bunch of savages."

"Savages? Just because we did not have atom bombs, industrial pollution, prisons and all those goodies? It is funny what you call us. We think it's the other way around. You no longer know how to appreciate the Mother Earth you live on and you're wasting it away. This earth was made for everyone, two legged, four legged, and six legged. Those who swim, those who fly, those who slither along the earth. All Mother Earth produces is for everyone."

"But don't you understand, Mr. Hornplanter? When we came here you people were savages, you used to scalp each other."

"Hah! Look who's talking about scalping! As for calling us savages, you mean just because we don't have prisons, jails, atom bombs, concentration camps and all those goodies we're savages? You think you're the ones who discovered the wealth of this Mother Earth? Let me tell you, mister foreigner, we have been living on this earth for thousands of generations before you people came out of the trees to disturb us. You know, I have to give Dick Gregory credit for saying the only bad thing about us Indians was we had a lousy immigration policy. Every November you people ask me, 'How am I going to prepare your turkey?' But you know, your fancy agriculturalist have cross-bred these poor creatures so they don't have any flavor any more. So I eat something else."

"But, Mr. Hornplanter, Thanksgiving commemorates a great discovery, the great move in progress, that we have a great democracy..."

"What's this great democracy with your damn near five hundred broken treaties? I heard the story of some archeologists who dug up a princess from Sumeria and they brought her back to life. And she was taken to England to see all the wonders of modern society, but she had one question: 'Your slaves, how come they're all smiling?'"

They answered, "Oh but they're not slaves, they have the vote." "The vote?"

"Yes, where everybody selects who is going to be their leaders. Oohh! How ingenious." You tell us we were scalpers. But you make us look like we were pikers. Nobody can scalp the way you palefaces do!"

"But, Mr. Hornplanter, aren't you glad you're an American?"

"I know what I am, you don't have to tell me... You came to this land, you didn't bother asking what we call it – you go ahead and name it after an Italian cartographer who didn't even know as much as his wife did. You call that scientific. Besides… how is it every generation you have a couple wars and kill off people, instead of study the science of birth control? There would still be land for everybody and room for everybody."

"Ah, but mister Hornplanter, you don't appreciate our modern science"

"Who the heck can appreciate your modern science except the capitalist class that rules you ... And… ruins you?"

"So you see, my dear nephew, we dumb savages aren't so dumb after all. We have a lot of things to teach these people, … if they'd only stop and listen. Yeah we got a looong ways to go and these wars aren't doing any good."

"But, Mr. Hornplanter, there have always been wars; even the bible mentioned wars..."

"Yeah, that's just like the bible to mention wars; there will be wars and rumors of wars, and as long as there are wars there isn't going to be any harmony on this earth. How can you possibly have harmony when everybody is trying to grab everybody else's land? How are you going to have peace when people are being killed all the time?"

"But, Mr. Hornplanter, there have always been wars ... you people had your wars too!"

"Huh! We did, we're not perfect. But I'll make a deal with you. You keep track of all the wars we Indians had and I'll keep track of all the wars you people had. Now, I mean Indian fighting Indian, white people fighting white people – we're not gonna count the Indian defending their land against the invader. ...

"And what you call Christmas – your orgies of gift giving. Who the heck benefits? The big merchants. You just get poorer and poorer. Sooo...

"As for the election, there was one Yankee a few centuries ago who said, 'If elections ever changed anything they would be made illegal.' What do I give a darn who's going to be the leader of this land? You say we elect; we don't do any electing. They've just set up a bunch of dopes for us to choose, either way they can't lose. Whether it's Willy Wet-Pants or Chorszitski or Bully Boy bomb-dropper, they're all the same stripe.

"The only kind of election is when the worker on the job uses his 'economic power,' the withholding of his efficiency – that is the only democracy. The only democratic way. It has been tried a few times. Of course, all the other plutocrats gang up on them and they don't last long, but hope for the human race always blooms eternal."

Remember, Draftees of the World Unite – You Have Nothing to Lose but Your Generals and a Whole World to Gain.

— C.C. Red Cloud

IWW truckers strike over wait time...

continued from page 1

Dec. 5, at a local truck stop outside of Stockton to decide on a course of action. Drivers estimated that the company's unfulfilled promises amount to $1,000 per month loss in pay for each driver. So they decided to fax a letter with their demands to the company and give it until Dec, 8 to respond. A four-member committee was elected to handle communication with the other drivers and prevent the company from spreading misinformation to divide them.

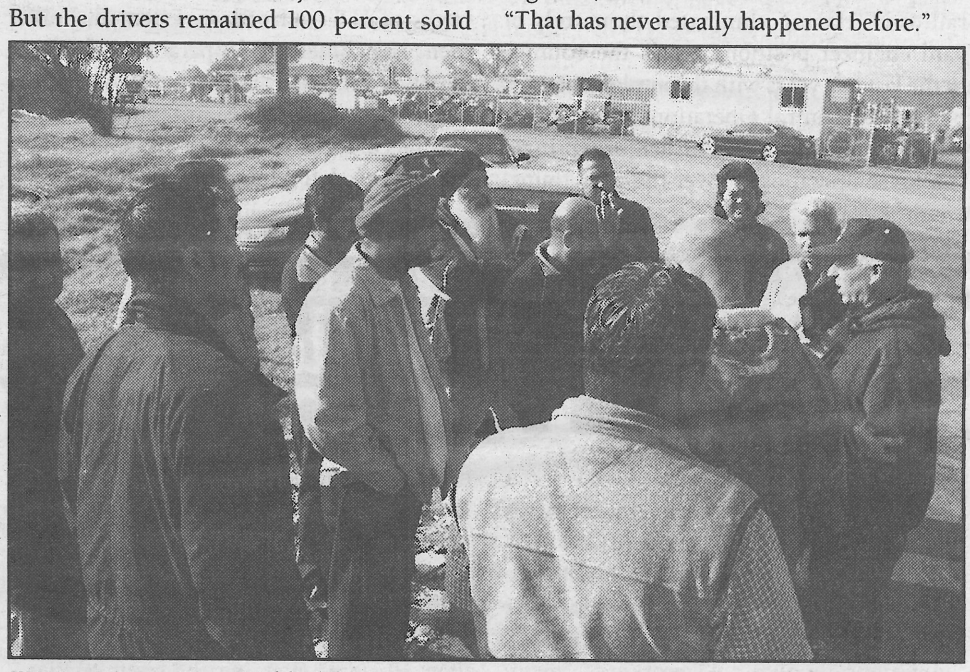
Bay Area Branch Field Organizer Bruce Valde was in the East Bay IWW office ready to fax the letter Monday morning when drivers called to let him know that managers, having heard that they would receive a fax from the union, were hovering over the machine. "I thought the idea of the bosses waiting around the machine was kind of funny, so I waited a little while before I sent the fax just to make them sweat a little," said Valde. The Dec. 8 deadline passed without any response from management and drivers began calling each other to spread word of the strike the next morning.

In response to the strike, Fresno-based management initially told drivers in a December 10 phone conversation that two strike leaders would not be "welcome back" to the company, though they later denied saying this. The company also made several calls to drivers falsely claiming that other drivers had returned to work and offering them extra loads should they return to work. But the drivers remained 100 percent solid the next day to resign as a group, the boss called back. If they came to the offices in nearby Fresno, he said, the company would have the cops evict them. But he agreed to meet all the workers' demands (most notably to pay a previously agreed 20 percent bonus on all loads to compensate drivers for increased fuel costs) except for paying for all wait time over an hour. That, he said, would have to wait until May when the company renegotiates its contracts with the brokers. (Many brokers are already paying the companies for wait times over an hour, truckers say, but the companies are pocketing the money.)

But since unpaid wait time was the central issue, the drivers rejected the offer and told the company they were quitting. Other IWW drivers (non-IWW drivers are increasingly hard to find in Stockton, as nearly 220 are now carrying IWW cards) will refuse to work for Kach so long as it refuses to honor its previous agreements with the truckers. Since the truckers own (or lease) their own vehicles, if the boss wants the cargo moved he'll have to haul the trailers himself.

"With this strike we taught the bosses a lesson: that they can't afford to ignore the demands of the drivers," said IWW organizer Harjit Gill. "We've shown that the drivers are united and willing to take action… and the companies know that the union is behind the drivers in refusing to be mistreated."

The Kach strike was the beginning of a campaign to force the trucking companies to honor the agreements they made last Spring to settle the strike. "The [Nov. 20] meeting was really great because it brought everyone together," said one of the Indian drivers. "That has never really happened before."



IWW organizer Bruce Valde (R) meets with Kach strikers. PHOTO: HARJIT GILL

Gov't workers have right to wear union buttons

The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled that the Ector County (Texas) Hospital District violated Urbano Herrera's First Amendment rights four years ago when supervisors repeatedly ordered the carpenter to remove a "Union Yes" button. Herrera and other CWA supporters were disciplined when they refused to comply with a hospital dress code barring buttons and other adornment.

When Herrera's annual pay raise was cut, the CWA brought a civil rights lawsuit against the hospital district seeking compensation for lost pay and benefits, attorney's fees, and an injunction prohibiting future enforcement of the policy. (Because the district is a public employer, it is not covered by the National Labor Relations Act.)

At trial, the judge ruled for Herrera; the district then appealed, resulting in the December 2004 appeals court ruling.

The decision means that Herrera gets about $1,000 in back pay (and his attorney $90,000), and the bosses can't tell him to remove his "Union Yes" button. Unfortunately, he will never exercise that right. Herrera died in an construction accident in 2003.

Farewell, Fellow Worker

Ottilie Markholt

Longtime IWW member Ottilie Markholt died Nov. 25, after a lifetime of labor activism and scholarship. She wrote hundreds of articles on West Coast labor history and other topics, and several books including *Maritime Solidarity.* Markholt began interviewing figures such as Wobbly Ralph Chaplin, sailor Pete Gill, and longshore worker Tiny Thronson in the 1930s. Her writing style was always forceful and devoted to labor's cause.

Ottilie was born near the Arctic Circle in Candle, Alaska, Feb. 25, 1916. She raised her two sons, both active in the labor movement, while earning her living working in Tacoma trade union offices. A memorial celebration is being planned for January 30.

NLRB attacks temp workers' union rights

In yet another 3-2 decision, the National Labor Relations Board has overturned existing precedent, ruling that temporary workers supplied by staffing firms can not be included in a bargaining unit with regular employees without the consent of both the temp agency and the user employer.

Many employers rely on temp agencies to supply a large part of the work force, often keeping the temps on for months or years at a time. The Board had held that such workers were joint employees; it now holds that they are part of multi-employer units.

BOOKS FOR REBELLIOUS WORKERS

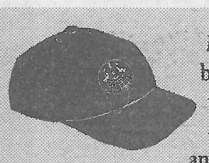


Solidarity Forever: The IWW's Labor History Calendar Centenary Edition

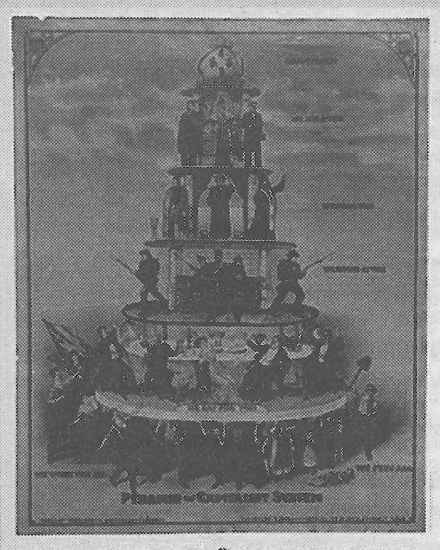
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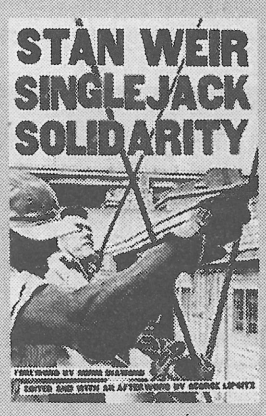
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Singlejack Solidarity by Stan Weir

Edited and with an afterword by George Lipsitz

Foreword by Norm Diamond

Blue-collar intellectual and activist publisher, Stan Weir devoted his life to the advocacy of his fellow workers. Weir was both a thoughtful observer and an active participant in many of the key struggles that shaped the labor movement and the political left in postwar America. He reported firsthand from the front lines of decisive fights over the nature of unions in the auto industry, the resistance to automation on the waterfront, and battles over racial integration in the workplace and within unions themselves.

Written throughout Weir's decades as a blue-collar worker and labor educator, *Singlejack Solidarity* offers a rare look at modern life and social relations as seen from the factory, dockside, and the shop floor. This volume analyzes issues central to working-class life today, such as the human costs of automation, union policies, mass media images of work, and intergenerational relations in working-class families. It also provides humorous commentaries, historical vignettes, and moving portraits of people Weir encountered, including James Baldwin, C. L. R. James, and Eric Hoffer. Gathered here for the first time, Weir's writings are equal parts memoir, labor history, and polemic; taken together, they document a crucial chapter in the life story of working-class America. ***384 pages, $20.00***

Punching Out & Other Writings by Martin Glaberman, edited & introduced by Staughton Lynd

A collection of writings by autoworker, historian and poet Marty Glaberman. This collection reprints Glaberman's classic writings on the union movement, Marxism, the challenges facing radical movements in the 1970s and 1980s, the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, and a selection of labor poetry. Among the gems to be found are Egghead comics, an appreciation of C.L.R. James, and of course a reprint of the classic pamphlet on business unionism, Punching Out. Glaberman celebrated the possibilities of informal work groups both to resist capitalism and to run industry once we've dumped the bosses off our backs. 231 pages, ***$14.00***



Just Passing Through by Paco Ignacio Taibo II

In this elegant and literate mystery adventure novel set in 1920's post-revolutionary Mexico, Paco Ignacio Taibo II is searching for a hero, specifically a leftist hero, and he thinks he has found him in the person of Sebastián San Vicente. But everyone, including the baffled novelist, is trying to figure out exactly who San Vicente really is. There is some record of San Vicente in FBI records during the Wilson era, and some mention of him in anarchist records and rumors, but the rest has to be filled in. And who better to do this than Taibo? Meanwhile, with Taibo busy in the background trying to resolve the mystery of his hero's identity, San Vicente goes about his heroic avocation of organizing strikes against the capitalists, dodging thugs and hiding out from the Mexican Army.

173 pages, **published at $21.95, now just $10.00**



Heart of Spain: Robert Capa's Photographs of the Spanish Civil War

This coffee table-format book features stunning reproductions of over 100 of Robert Capa's photos, most featuring the militia on the front and at home, but also including several photos documenting the ways in which women played a key role in the struggle. Essays and poems give context to the photos. 199 pages, **$30.00**

Green Bans, Red Union, Environmental Activism and the New South Wales Builders Labourers' Federation

by Meredith and Verity Burgmann

At the height of the Australian building industry boom in the 1970s a remarkable union campaign stopped billions of dollars worth of indiscriminate development that was turning Australian cities into concrete jungles. Enraging employers and politicians but delighting many in the wider community, the members of the New South Wales Builders Labourers' Federation risked their jobs in order to preserve buildings, bush and parkland. The direct impact of this "green bans" movement can be seen all over Sydney. *Green Bans, Red Union* documents the development of a union that took direct action on a number of social issues. Apart from the green bans movement, union members also used their industrial power to support the rights of oppressed groups, such as Aborigines, women and homosexuals. In telling the colorful story that inspired many environmentalists and ordinary citizens, Meredith and Verity Burgmann open a window on a period when Australian workers led the world in innovative and stunningly effective forms of environmental protest.

352 pages, paperback, **$20.00**

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Song: Class Act

BY LEN WALLACE X353482

We work in the factories, offices and homes,
Some on the welfare, Some on the dole.
The ones at the top say don't ask why,
But I'll tell you all why, it's a Class Act.

If you work for a pay cheque every day
And try to get a lot from a little bit of pay
And you can't buy back the things you've made
Then welcome to the world of the Class Act.

It's a Class Act, friend, that puts you in your place
It's a Class Act when they make you run the race
It's a Class Act when they try and keep us down
You can turn it all around with a Class Act.

If you fret about work how to make the money stretch
While a big politician gives a handout to the rich
If you think it ain't fair and say life's a bitch
It's all because it's a Class Act.

It's a Class Act when you got a job and love it
It's a Class Act when you tell the boss to shove it
It's a Class Act when you strike for higher pay
If they send in scabs that's a Class Act.

When you're tired and cold and walking that line
I tell you that is a Class Act.
For a vision and the dream and the cause that never dies
If you stand by the workers it's a Class Act.

There's a few at the top who always had their way,
And try to hide the fact it's a class act.
But there's many at the top and we're gonna have our say.
We can change all that with a Class Act.

It's a class act if you stand for your rights
It's a class act too if you organise and fight
It's a class act three if you say it isn't right
That the way we live is a class act.

If you think life's drudge and work means pain
And the new world order is a world insane.
If you dream a better world the dreams not in vain
Just make it a fact with a Class Act.

If we don't stand together, together we fall
Cause an injury to one's an injury to all.
Sisters and brothers heed the words of the song
What the world really needs is a class act.

. . .

We can win a whole world with a Class Act.

Socialists and labor parties

Eric Chester, *True Mission: Socialists and the Labor Party Question in the U.S.* Pluto Press, 2004, 260 pp., paper.

IWW member (and former Socialist Party vice presidential candidate) Eric Chester's latest book offers a critical look at that perennial chimera: the Labor Party illusion.

True Mission examines five critical moments when it seemed that the death grip of the two-party system might be broken: the 1886 Henry George mayoral campaign, the 1910s debate within the Socialist Party over whether the party should dissolve itself into AFL-led third party efforts, the independent 1924 LaFollette "progressive" campaign, the American Labor Party of the 1930s (less a labor party than an attempt to channel radical workers into the Democratic Party), and the LaFollette-like 2000 Nader run.

Chester concludes that labor partyism has failed at every level – and that what is needed is a genuinely socialist movement, committed to challenging the capitalist system that condemns so many to lives of misery.



South Korean strike targets labor "reforms"

More than 150,000 workers joined strikes at 398 workplaces across South Korea Nov. 26 in a six-hour strike to protest proposed new labor legislation. Unions originally said they would launch an indefinite general strike, but scaled back plans after it became clear that the proposed law was far from passage.

The legislation would allow companies to hire more temporary workers and ban strikes by government workers. The government, headed by a former labor lawyer, says the measures are necessary in order to revive the economy.

South Korean companies are hiring growing numbers of temporary workers, who are paid 20 percent less than regular employees, to cut costs. According to official figures there are about 4.6 million temporary workers in South Korea even though current Korean law allows their hiring in only a handful of business sectors.

Both of Korea's labor federations oppose the legislation, and have vowed to respond with an all-out general strike if the government attempts to implement it.

Strikers also demanded abolition of the National Security Law, withdrawal of Korean troops from Iraq, and full labor rights for public employees.

Pickets close Filipino sugar mill where 14 strikers killed

In the aftermath of a police attack that killed 14 workers and children, two striking unions have returned to picket lines outside the Central Azucarera de Tarlac sugar mill, completely shutting down operations at one of the Philippines' largest sugar refineries despite a heavy police presence.

Management claims that they have continued operations, milling stockpiled sugarcane with management personnel. (The strike involves mill workers, represented by the CAT Labor Union, and farm workers in the United Luisita Workers' Union.) "The fumes from the sugar mill cannot lie," said CATLU president, Ricardo Ramos. "Factory



operations have totally stopped."

Workers struck to demand reinstatement of hundreds of laid-off workers, including several union officers, and new labor agreements. The mill is owned by the family of former Philippines president Corazon Aquino, which has used its political connections in attempts to break the strike.

Two labor internationals plan merger to confront capital

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the World Confederation of Labour plan to merge, bringing together some 170 million members in over 150 countries. The 27-million member WCL was founded in 1920 as a Catholic church-dominated labor grouping; the ICFTU was a social democrat-led split from the World Federation of Trade Unions, many of whose 150 million remaining members belong to government-controlled "unions" like China's ACFTU.

WCL Secretary-General Willy Thys told ICFTU delegates that the merger would help combat "neo-liberal policies confronting us throughout the world" and give unions more influence on the three bodies as at the heart of neo-liberal globalization – the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organisation.

Speakers at the ICFTU conference stressed the need to organize across borders to ensure that workers are not competing against one another in a race to the bottom. "The logic of globalization is that international action should become a much bigger part of national unions' thinking," said ICFTU general secretary Guy Ryder.

The merger comes as the International Labour Organization reports that half of the world's workers – 1.4 billion people – are trapped in grinding poverty, unable to earn enough to lift their family incomes above the US$2 a day poverty line. Some 550 million people are living on less than $1 a day.

"In a political and economic climate in which 60 million children in India are exposed to forced labor and 32 percent of Albanians between 6 and 17 years of age work, the planned unification will help trade unions to more effectively represent workers," the ICFTU said.

Ironically, as ICFTU delegates gathered in Japan December 5 – 10, discussing the need for global solidarity and coordinated international labor action, members of most affiliated unions (including the AFL-CIO) do not even know they are members of such an international, and their union leaders' global policies remain primarily oriented toward making alliances with domestic employers to combat international competition.

British labour leaders take bruising for Iraqi yellow union

BY PETER MOORE

British trade union leaders took a bruising at the European Social Forum in October 15, when Iraqi activists exposed their association with a union federation backed by the occupation authority in Iraq.

A small group of 30 people disrupted the plenary session, shouting "murderer, murderer" at the general secretary of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions, Subhi Al Mashadami, who sat smiling in a beige suit and tie. Mashadami had also recently spoken at a trade union conference.

The protesters alleged that he had collaborated with the occupation authority and also with Saddam Hussein's government.

Fellow panelist Sabah Jawad of Iraq Democrats Against Occupation denounced him as the leader of a "yellow union" but pleaded with protesters to respect his right to speak. The protesters ignored this and other pleas, including a vote for them to leave.

Mashadani's assistant grabbed the microphone and shouted at the protesters before passing the microphone to Mashadani. At this point, one protester broke past security and charged the stage. The head of security then hauled a flailing Mashadani down the stairs and threw him through an open stage door. The meeting was declared over. Lindsay German of the Stop The War Coalition UK denounced the protesters as anti-democratic.

Earlier that day, Haifa Zangana, an Iraqi novelist, had denounced Mashadami as a collaborator during a session titled "Ending the Occupation and Liberating Iraq." She urged people to walk out in protest.

"He claims to be the representative of the Iraqi unions," she said. When asked by activists what they should do, she replied flatly, "I think you should work it out for yourself... I don't think they should have any platform to speak on."

One of the Social Forum organizers from the French Campagne Civile Internationale pour la Protection du Peuple Palestinien, Nahla Chahal, said that the decision to invite Mashadami was "a big fight" with the European trade unions. Their insistence on inviting him "tells us the work that still has to be done among trade unions."

The European Social Forum, wrought by internal dissent and open protest over three days, decided to convene again in 2006. The European Social Forum is the regional incarnation of the carnival of ideas first held in the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and most recently in Mumbai, India.

Strike vs. economic policy

Millions of Italians stopped work Dec. 1 to protest government economic policies. A nationwide half-day stoppage crippled public transport and shut factories and banks. Government offices were shut all day. The action was called by the main union federations to protest an austerity budget for 2005 that freezes spending on transport, education and health. On the eve of the strike, the government announced it would also cut taxes in a bid to bolster its faltering public support. Those cuts, which are targeted to high-income households, are likely to lead to further austerity measures.

UK unions may strike against pension "reforms"

British unions say they will strike if necessary to block Labour government plans to increase the pension age of public sector workers from 60 to 65. The government also wants to change the way in which pensions are calculated, basing them on employees' average salary throughout their service rather than according to final salary levels.

The government claims the changes are about making the pensions system fairer for the lower paid, and not as a cash-saving measure. Unions say some people could see their pensions halved.

Unions blockade Zimbabwe

The Congress of South African Trade Unions has announced a series of protest actions against the Zimbabwean government, including a blockade of border posts, to protest the government's abuse of workers' labor and political rights.

World Labor Solidarity

A COLUMN BY THE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMISSION

Colombian union, Indian farmers unite against Coke

BY PETER MOORE

Under a red-and-white banner of "Murder: It's The Real Thing," Amit Srivastava and Edgar Paez told 60 people from the northern English cities of Leeds and Bradford about the impact of the Coca-Cola corporation on Indian communities and Colombian labour unions at the 1 in 12 Club of Bradford, West Yorkshire, October 11.

The Coca-Cola Accountability Tour UK was a seven-city tour of England and Scotland through Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Bradford, Glasgow and London. They also spoke at the European Social Forum, where they demanded Forum organizers stop the vendors at the main venue from selling Coca-Cola. Forum organizers agreed, according to the *Red Pepper* web log.

The Indian and Colombian activists first saw learned they shared a common cause at the World Social Forum in January 2004 held in Mumbai, India. They decided to campaign jointly on Coca-Cola's impact on human rights and the environment and promote public awareness and an international boycott of Coca-Cola.

"In order to challenge a multinational, we need to have a multinational response," said Amit Srivastava of the India Resource Centre.

Edgar Paez of the Colombian food workers union, SINALTRAINAL, agreed. "Before, Colombia and India were going in different directions. Today it's a victory that both campaigns are now coming together."

In India, Srivastava said the rallying point in India is water. Coca-Cola pumps four million litres of water per day from the ground water in just one factory in India to mix soda drinks and clean bottles, he said.

"Community resistance to Coke is having an impact on the decision-makers in India," he said, even if it has only led to the Indian parliament banning it from their cafeteria.

On November 25, a community protest of 1,000 Indians who feared water contamination and depletion could ruin their livelihood as farmers, ended their 250 kilometer march from one Coca-Cola bottling factory to another. As the march approached the factory gates, police attacked the crowd, arresting at least 350 people.

"Coca-Cola is extracting so much water that community wells go dry," he said, citing one community near a Coca-Cola factory that had 10 wells go dry. Coca-Cola discharges its waste water back into the ground, which has led to chlorine contaminated ground water. The Indian government has posted public notices warning of water contamination and it has also ordered Coca-Cola to stop distributing lead- and cadmium-laced by-products to farmers to use as fertilizer. High levels of pesticides in bottled Coca-Cola have also embarrassed the corporation.

"We will comply with whatever standards the Government concludes are the most appropriate for soft drinks in India," said Coca-Cola on its web site in response to the pesticide allegations.

In Colombia, Paez's union is demanding justice for the murders of eight union leaders and union-busting tactics that included kidnapping, burning the union headquarters, and allowing a paramilitary organization to run a Coca-Cola bottling factory for three months.

The wife of one of the murdered union leaders was murdered after denouncing the company for its complicity with her husband's murder. Her children are now orphans, living with aunts and uncles. Colombia is not unique as paramilitaries have busted unions at Coca-Cola bottlers before using assassination. In the early 1980s, paramilitaries murdered two union leaders in Guatemala.

Coca-Cola has denied that it or its "bottling partners" violate human rights in Colombia. "[W]e believe that calls for boycotts of our products are not the appropriate way to further any cause, as they primarily hurt the local economy, local businesses and local citizens," said a statement on its web site.

Paez said that the Coca-Cola boycott is a way of challenging impunity and capitalism in Colombia and India. "Coca-Cola is not just a black and smelly liquid, it is a way of life. ... Every time we buy a Coca-Cola, we are supporting its plan of war against the people," he said. "We participate and struggle because capitalism doesn't want just a piece, it wants everything."

International Encuentro

The Ronda de Pensamiento Autónomo/ Circle of Autonomous Thought invites activists to an International Encuentro Jan. 20-23 in Buenos Aires to share experiences and build new paths. "We do not have a pre-set goal for where to end up, we simply want to walk and construct our own paths, without tutors, without having others walk for us. With freedom and self-determination."

For info: www.eneroautonomo.org.ar